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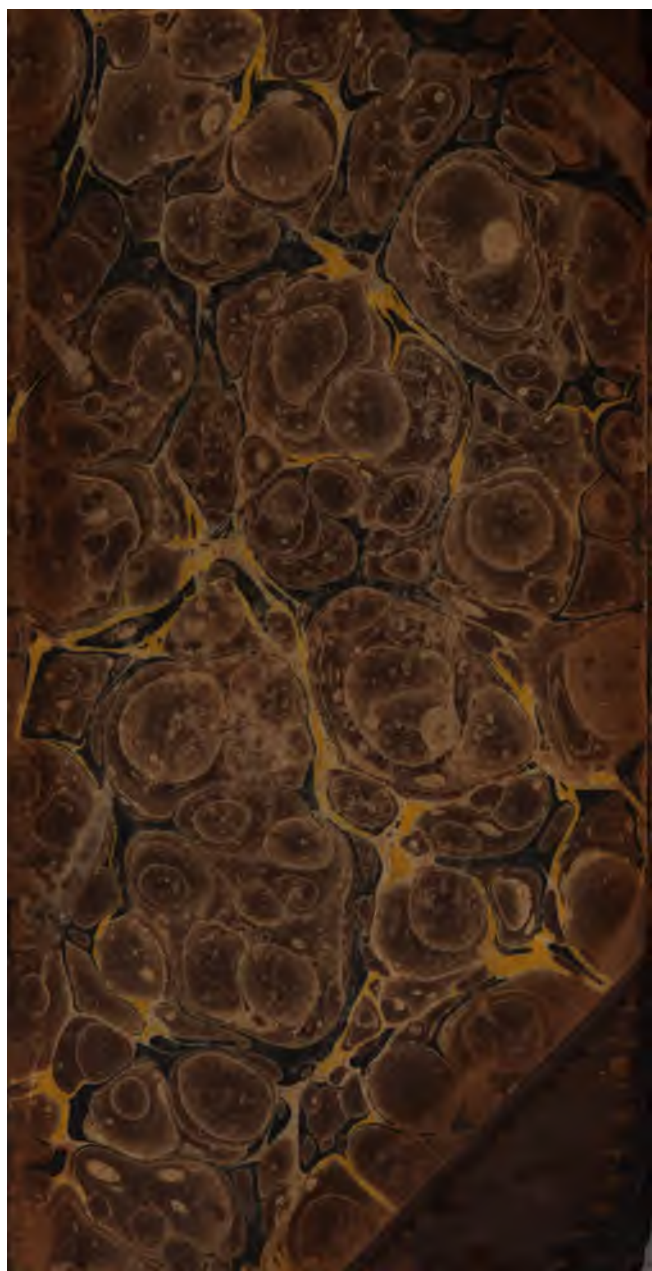
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152.









PROFILE OF \*

The Rev<sup>d</sup>. Robert Porten Brachcroft A.M.

If on the glowing canvas we behold  
 But a faint image of the friends we mourn,  
 Scarce can this "SHADE" his lineaments unfold  
 Whose memory lives on many a bosom borne.  
 Yet far above his mortal mouldering part  
 Faith points her peerless vision; & surveys  
 The immortal graces of a Christian heart.  
 Their spotless purity, their cloudless rays.  
 Admire & imitate, his faith so strong,  
 His love so fervid, & his deeds so bright,  
 Like him, in wakeful prayer, in Sacred Song,  
 Pass joyfully along this vale of night.  
 Till, free from earth, & on A SAVIOUR'S breast.  
 Thou taste the sweetness of eternal rest.

\* The only likeness of him that the Author has been enabled to obtain.

# A M E M O I R

OF THE REV.

ROBERT P. BEACHCROFT, A. M.

RECTOR OF BLUNHAM, BEDFORDSHIRE,  
AND CHAPLAIN TO THE RIGHT HON. VISCOUNT GODERICH,  
&c. &c. &c.

BY

THOMAS ANTHONY METHUEN, A. M.:

RECTOR OF ALL CANNINGS AND GARS DON, WILTS; AND CHAPLAIN  
TO HIS GRACE THE DUKE OF BEAUFORT.

"They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and  
they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever."

DANIEL xii. 3.

"Vitâ, voce, manu, populum pascebat IESU,  
Qui nunc cælesti pascitur ipse cibo.

(From an Inscription on the Monument of the Rev. Anthony  
Methuen, Vicar of Frome, who died anno domini 1645.)

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1832.

152.





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## DEDICATION.

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TO THE

RIGHT HON. LORD GRANTHAM,

. &c. &c. &c.

---

MY LORD,

IN dedicating, by permission, to your Lordship the following very humble *Memoir*, I appear to myself to act with the strictest propriety and order. For, as your Lordship honoured the deceased Rector of Blunham with the earliest and latest testimonies of true regard, and even allotted to him that station in the church in which it was his indefatigable aim to preach her doctrines, and to exalt the object of her adoration; so he ever spoke of

your Lordship with feelings of grateful recollection and reciprocal esteem.

That God may ever bless you, as he blessed your departed Friend, with “the excellency of the knowledge of *Christ Jesus our Lord*,” is the unfeigned prayer of him who has the honour to remain,

My Lord,

Your Lordship's obliged and obedient,

THOMAS ANTHONY METHUEN.

*All Cannings,*

Aug. 27, 1831.

## P R E F A C E.

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THE following Work was projected under circumstances which may possibly entitle it to some little indulgence from the reader. On the decease of *Mr. Beachcroft*, in November 1830, the author, being one of his oldest and most attached friends, proposed to his nearest surviving relative to prepare for "the Christian Observer" a record of his life and labours. It was suggested, in reply to that proposal, that a somewhat more extended "Memoir," might prove interesting to his relations and friends. With this suggestion the author perhaps too hastily complied; and, he fears, consulted his feelings rather than his ability for the under-

taking. Indeed so intense was his affection for his departed friend, and so highly did he estimate Mr. Beachcroft both as a Christian and a Minister of Christ, that, even with the full consciousness that the work might have fallen into abler hands, he could not deny himself the mournful satisfaction of attempting it.

That much may be expected of the biographer in the present instance he is himself painfully aware ; since his subject is one of no minor excellence and no transitory interest. In Mr. Beachcroft were combined the most valuable and attractive, if not the most commanding qualities. And if his station in the church of Christ was less elevated and conspicuous, his field of labour less extended, and his services consequently less known than those of many other clergymen whose history has been presented to the public, it may nevertheless be said with truth " he was no common man."

The author may be allowed to add that he has used his best judgment in selecting from the materials before him, and that he has endeavoured to guard against that subtle influence of friendship which, in all biographical attempts, is so apt to exaggerate excellencies, and to conceal defects of character. He has now only to implore the blessing of Almighty God upon a work which, however feeble in its execution, is at least sincerely intended to promote the glory of his name. And should "the Spirit of truth" vouchsafe, in any one instance, to make this "Memoir" of the deceased conducive to the faith and repentance and spiritual progress of the living, more particularly to the zeal and activity of the younger ministers of Christ, the memorialist will have abundant cause to "magnify the Lord," and to "rejoice in God our Saviour."



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32.

152.





100

101

102

103

104

105

106

107

108

## CONTENTS.

---

### CHAPTER I.

	PAGE
The Birth, Parentage, and Education of Mr. Beachcroft.—Early indications of Character . . .	1

### CHAPTER II.

His Entrance and Progress at the University.—Continued symptoms of a religious state of mind.—Notes on Lectures in Theology.—Short Extracts from his Journal and Correspondence . . .	13
---	----

### CHAPTER III.

His Marriage—Preparation for the Ministry.—Ordination . . . . .	28
---	----

### CHAPTER IV.

His exemplary diligence as Curate of Tottenham, Middlesex.—The success of his ministerial labours	40
---	----

**CHAPTER V.**

His presentation to the Rectory of Blunham.—His commencement of Residence.—His devotedness to Ministerial Duties . . . . .	55
--	----

**CHAPTER VI.**

The subjects and character of his Preaching . . . .	70
---	----

**CHAPTER VII.**

The subject and character of his Preaching.—Certain Letters of Mr. Beachcroft . . . . .	85
--	----

**CHAPTER VIII.**

His zeal and fidelity as a Parish Priest . . . .	107
--	-----

**CHAPTER IX.**

His domestic Character . . . . .	130
----------------------------------	-----

**CHAPTER X.**

His Retirement in the Closet.—His Diary and Cor- respondence . . . . .	149
---	-----

**CHAPTER XI.**

His social Character . . . . .	176
--------------------------------	-----

**CHAPTER XII.**

His public exertions in support of Religious Institu- tions . . . . .	196
--	-----

CHAPTER XIII.

His declining Health—last Illness—happy Composure of Mind—dying Testimony and End . . .	214
---	-----

CHAPTER XIV.

Subject continued . . . . .	231
-----------------------------	-----

CHAPTER XV.

His Funeral.—Unanimous marks of respect for his Memory.—Monumental Tablet and Epitaph written by himself.—Summary of his Character.—An Elegy.—Concluding Remarks . . . . .	249
--	-----

---

EXTRACTS from the Funeral Sermon preached by the Rev. Mr. Mendham . . . . .	267
---	-----

## TO THE BINDER.

---

Profile . . . . .	to face	<i>Title</i>
Monumental Tablet . . . .	—	257

# MEMOIR

OF THE

## REV. R. P. BEACHCROFT.

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### CHAPTER I.

*The birth, parentage, and education of Mr. Beachcroft—Early indications of character.*

IF the birth-place of a poet, or a philosopher, be usually sought out with eagerness, and contemplated with delight, that of an eminent Christian and a devoted minister of Christ, should not be a matter of indifference. The spot where he first drew breath, is calculated to excite associations of the most pleasing and profitable kind. All he did, and all he was, may there occur to our recollection. And scarcely can the imagination fail to contrast the powers of the man with the feebleness

of the child—his progress in life with his repose in the cradle. Here, too, the active spirit of Christian meditation may trace the mercy of Omnipotence in the preservation of a helpless infant. His mercy was sufficiently visible in the case of the individual before us; who, at a very early age, almost sunk under a violent attack of small-pox. Nothing, humanly speaking, then preserved his life but the sudden determination of his aunt, and that in direct opposition to the judgment of his medical attendants, to admit into his room a free current of air. The infant immediately revived, and eventually recovered. To him, therefore, was peculiarly applicable the beautiful language of the Psalmist:\* “Thou wast my hope when I hanged yet upon my mother’s breasts.”

It cannot, then, be uninteresting to remark, that Mr. Beachcroft was born at Queen Hithe, near London, in the year 1781. His father was a respectable merchant, and though unpossessed of opulence, was nevertheless sufficiently furnished with the wealth of this world. *Robert* being their only child, both his parents regarded him with that affection, and watched over him with that anxiety, which he appeared pecu-

\* Ps. xxii. 8.

liarly to claim. Scarcely had three months elapsed, when it pleased the supreme Disposer of all temporal events to bereave him of his father. As the loss was great, especially at such an age, so it was compensated, in no inconsiderable degree, by the exemplary conduct of his still surviving parent. A relative of the latter, when lately corresponding on the subject, expressed herself to the following effect:—  
 “The affectionate care of his mother never allowed him to feel his loss, as you will see by the following note, written by himself, on visiting his father’s tomb.”

*March 19, 1819.*

“Yesterday I rode to Wanstead to see the state of our vault, containing the remains of one so dear to us both. The day was fine, but very cold. The sun was shining upon the inscription which told me that my father died at my own present age. I reviewed the many unmerited mercies of thirty-seven years to me. I thought of you, who had never suffered me to feel his loss. And, while I lamented the imperfections that had clung too closely to the discharge of all my filial duties, I prayed that I might ever stand in his place,



over whose remains I was then standing; and that if I were removed before you, the wisdom of a much better hand than mine might guide you safely to your journey's end. I derived a most peculiar pleasure from my ride, and humbly hoped that, if departed spirits knew what was passing upon earth, my parent, whom I had not the privilege of knowing, would yet not be ashamed to know me as a child of God, and an heir of the promises made to me in Christ Jesus."

The above allusion to the affectionate conduct of his mother may be supposed to have partly originated in the following fact, namely, that to the sacred volume she invited the thoughts and affections of his childhood; to the great depository of truth she resorted for such maternal lessons as she felt it her duty to administer; the Bible was thus early heard, as it was late remembered, by Mr. Beachcroft. That grace which prompted, also eventually prospered, the efforts of his beloved mother. Nor did she manifest a slight concern for the eternal welfare of her child, when, at length, she presented him with Doddridge's invaluable work "On the Rise and Progress of Religion." Of

his perusal of that little volume, as also of his habit of reading "The Oracles of Truth," due mention will be made in another part of the memoir. One circumstance, however, must be noticed, as of some importance in the history of Mr. Beachcroft's childhood; namely, that his grandmother daily read to him some portion of the Psalms; since to the instrumentality of such a practice he very much ascribed his knowledge of those "songs of Sion."

Never, perhaps, was maternal care more worthily bestowed than in the case before us; since it never was more abundantly returned in filial affection and obedience. At that period, when the waywardness of the child may be said to antedate the perverseness and obstinacy of the man, and to realize the picture drawn by a divine hand, "as soon as they are born, they go astray and speak lies,"\* Mr. Beachcroft is said by those who were habitually around him, to have been "a very docile child, of a mild and amiable disposition; affectionately attached to his mother and to all his relations. He did not give early indications of piety; but he discovered a general love of truth and what was

\* Psalm lviii, 3.

morally good, with much tender feeling towards his fellow-creatures in general."

The following anecdote, contained in a letter from a lady, who knew him in his very infancy, may throw further light upon his character. "How often have I heard my dear husband say, with joy beaming in his countenance, and at the same time with a tear trickling down his cheek, that when the dear departed (Mr. Beachcroft) was a child, he would get into a chair, at —, with a book in his hand, saying, 'I will be a clergyman, I will preach to you;' at —, 'I will be one of the best of them.'" His infantile predictions were, at length, fully verified. Whatever construction be put upon the foregoing declaration of the child, it cannot but derive an interest from the subsequent conduct of the man; since the latter in fact so remarkably corresponded with the former.

Let the reader beware of the popular, but mistaken inference, "that a son so amiable could not be a partaker of a fallen and corrupt nature." That, on the contrary, even the most amiable are "born in sin," is a truth apparent to all who, taking the Bible as their standard, observe the disposition of a child; more especially his pride, his selfishness, his jealousy, his

occasional violations of truth; and above all, his slowness to enter on any one religious exercise. In candour, then, it must be admitted (and no one, in after life, was more ready to admit it than himself) that Mr. Beachcroft, though unquestionably a most pleasing and engaging child, was nevertheless "a child of Adam." As such he was influenced by those motives which are merely natural in his obedience to his widowed mother. He had not yet known what it is to be "transformed" by grace "in the renewing of his mind," and to be constrained by that "love of Christ, which passeth knowledge." A distinction this between natural and religious virtue, which, in the progress of the present work, will be more particularly considered and maintained.

"At what school was Mr. Beachcroft educated?" is a question that will next be put by those who may be interested in his history. When he had entered on his sixth year, he was sent to a day-school in Ormond Street; and when eight years of age, he was placed at a seminary at Greenford, then under the care of Dr. Glasse. Here the author is possessed of very scanty information; and almost exclu-

sively of that which he received, some years ago, from the lips of Mr. Beachcroft himself. What he chiefly communicated with reference to the school was this: that the professional qualifications of his master, as well as his general deportment, entitled him to high respect; that his assiduity was great; and the institution strictly private. Under his care Mr. Beachcroft commenced that course of study, which afterwards obtained for him no mean academical distinction. At Greenford he also formed that acquaintance with an English nobleman,\* which was soon matured into a firm and lasting friendship. It may not be useless to observe that Mr. Beachcroft frequently spoke of the morals of a *private*, as contrasted with those of a *public*, school. Though he by no means came to a conclusion in favour of the latter, still he testified to the mistake of supposing that in the smaller seminary the proportion of vice must of necessity be also smaller. His words were nearly these: (of course he spoke generally :) "I shudder to think of what I myself witnessed in the behaviour of some of my school-fellows." This was principally intended as a

\* Lord Grantham.

testimony to the deep corruption of the human heart; the sad, though frequently disregarded, consequence of the fall of Adam.

Whatever were the religious advantages connected with his residence at Greenford, and notwithstanding "the reading and prayers" which took place in the seminary, (as appears by one of his memoranda,) they did not produce upon Mr. Beachcroft's mind any considerable effect. Impressed, as he even then was, with a certain sense of his obligations to respect religion; to observe its forms, to partake its ordinances, and to search the Scriptures, he was not yet habitually alive to the supreme importance of Christianity, as connected with his eternal interests. Yet the following letter, written in 1812, to a friend, may prove the activity of his early inquiries and perceptions on the foregoing subject: "Very many years ago I was convinced that there was something more behind the curtain . . . .  
 . . . . . than juvenile performers are permitted to behold. The system did not satisfy me. I searched and searched again; poked out old books *even in my school holidays*; and was so staggered after reading Jones's (probably Jones of Nayland)

‘Plan of Regeneration,’ that I procured Doddridge’s six sermons on the subject, and eased my mind of a heavy load. So with regard to other points. I would not call any author rabbi, or pin my faith upon his *ipse dixit* : but I gathered what I conceived to be the truth from them all. I don’t know, when I look back upon the last twenty years, that I ever gained any real instruction from argument, or from conversation ; but solely from reading, constant meditation, and prayer.”

Such (as recollected by himself in the days of matured piety and pastoral labour) were the workings of Mr. Beachcroft’s mind on the all-important doctrines of the Christian revelation ; and that, too, at a very early period of life. To the same period he adverts in a letter written to a friend in the year 1811 : “ In my boyish days I had read ‘ Sturm’s Reflections for every Day in the Year ;’ and by reading them, was led from the works of nature up to nature’s God.” As a schoolboy he commenced those theological investigations, which as a man he so devoutly and successfully pursued. Nor is there, in the foregoing statement, any real contradiction of the remark, lately submitted to the reader, namely, that Mr. Beachcroft,

when at school, was "not habitually alive to the supreme importance of Christianity, as connected with his eternal interests." A fact this subsequently admitted by himself. All that can fairly be inferred from that part of his correspondence which we have now quoted, is, that he was not without occasional, and those perhaps strong, feelings of a religious sort. Nor would we venture to affirm that they were *not* excited in his bosom by the Holy Spirit. Here, as every where, "the secret things belong to the Lord our God."\* Yet the religious feelings of Mr. Beachcroft confessedly had not then taken such constant possession of his heart as to constitute that supreme love to God which is the fulfilling of his law.

And, extraordinary as were his inquiries as a *schoolboy* respecting the regeneration which is effected by the Holy Spirit in the soul of every true believer, and whatever might have been the conviction of his mind (assuredly not then a distinct one) as to the lost state of man, his recovery through the grace of Him, who once "died for the ungodly," and justification through faith only; Mr. Beachcroft, like many other persons who have been religiously in-

\* Deut. xxix. 29.



structed by their parents, might be said to perceive the shadow, rather than to embrace the substance, of these scripture verities. That such was the undoubted fact the author has more than once collected from the conversation of his departed friend. Nor in after life was any one more ready than himself to admit the vast difference between the intellectual and the spiritual reception of the truth as it is in Jesus.

## CHAPTER II.

*His entrance and progress at the University—  
Continued symptoms of a religious state of  
mind—His notes on lectures on Theology—  
Short extracts from his Journal and Cor-  
respondence.*

THE next important period in the history of Mr. Beachcroft was his entrance at the University of Oxford in the year 1798; a period subsequently to which the author was brought, and (he scruples not to add) by the mercy of Divine Providence, into the society of so excellent a friend. The retrospect may be instructive to the reader, as it is in truth affecting to the writer. Mr. Beachcroft had, however, resided about a year in Oriel College, when that acquaintance took place between himself and

his biographer which soon afterwards assumed the higher character of friendship. Of that friendship (it must not be concealed) the peculiar circumstances of the college, relative to its younger members, materially enhanced the value. Here we allude to that pernicious habit of intoxication, which is at once so inimical to study, so disgraceful to character, and so fatal to the highest, the eternal interests of youth. Such was the prevalence of that habit (since so considerably subdued, if not totally expelled) at the period in question, that the very temperance of Mr. Beachcroft was no small recommendation of his society, and became not a little influential on the minds and manners of his contemporaries.

His habits, as an undergraduate, were such as to insure very high approbation on the part of his superiors. Being alive to the value of time, duly estimating the importance of an university education, and having continually in view the purposes for which it was designed, Mr. Beachcroft was not less diligent in the study, than attentive in the lecture-room. Consequently, when present in the latter, he was prepared to answer those questions, and to meet those difficulties, which perplexed his less

assiduous associates. Thus, too, he obtained from his tutors no inconsiderable meed of praise. Though gifted neither with great strength, unusual depth, nor extraordinary extent of mind, he was nevertheless so sound, so clear, so elegant, so vigorous in intellect, that, aided by natural sedulity, he made no slight proficiency both in the classics and the mathematics.

This proficiency appeared when Mr. Beachcroft at length became a candidate for the degree of bachelor of arts, in the year 1801. He was one of the six undergraduates who first encountered an examination under "the New Statute." The result, however, was highly honourable to Mr. Beachcroft; since he was thanked by the examiners (among whom was the present learned Bishop of Landaff) for the manner in which he had acquitted himself on that occasion. His name was consequently enrolled among those of the well-educated and well-informed.

Let parents, then, strenuously inculcate on the minds of their offspring, when resident at either of the Universities, the immense advantages of diligence. It not only brings into operation and distinction confessedly superior ta-

lents, but it also strengthens those of an inferior kind; so that the latter occasionally prove far more useful than the former. But, when idleness is the law of youth, and the golden privileges of an university education are thrown away, a foundation is laid for that regret, which is equally great and unavailing. What, then, must be the disgrace, and the self condemnation of the parent, who leaves his children, unadmonished and unreprieved, to the consequences of such a habit?

As Mr. Beachcroft was uniformly and on principle opposed to idleness, so was he distinguished alike by his manners and his morals. The former could not fail favourably to impress those who value urbanity and kindness. These, however, were his exterior and therefore his subordinate characteristics. At that period his morals were his highest praise. Daring to stand aloof from those whose society might have proved his ruin, whose habits were wholly incompatible with a due improvement of time, and therefore hostile to all his academical pursuits, he avoided many dangers which are truly formidable to youth. Pride, however, in no way governed his determination. None of his contemporaries would deny the

unassuming character of his deportment. It was, therefore, a strict regard to the advantages of moral conduct, as well as of intellectual improvement, that led him to enter his study while others were carousing at the table. To his temperance was naturally allied that sedateness of conversation, which gently, but significantly, rebuked those who were accustomed to speak with an unbridled tongue.

His integrity it is superfluous to notice, since it was unquestionably without a stain. No one was ever known to say, "I have placed too implicit confidence in Mr. Beachcroft." Connected with this valuable quality was his strict regard to economy, and his regularity in discharging bills. Parents can testify the value of the foregoing habits, whether from the ruinous extravagance, or the beneficial prudence, of their children. Nor is it unjust to add, that nothing more directly and powerfully fosters such "extravagance," than the practice of putting large sums of money into the hands of boys, to be spent, principally perhaps, in mere animal indulgences. The spendthrift at school will be a greater spendthrift at the University.

What Mr. Beachcroft was as a friend might be inferred from the preceding observations re-

lative to his mind and morals. Yet it may be sufficient generally to speak of this feature in his character, as it will be somewhat particularly noticed in a succeeding chapter. No one could be more favoured than the author in the enjoyment of that candid opinion, that wise counsel, that affectionate sympathy, which constituted, in no small measure, the value of his departed friend. Here he may confidently appeal to all who were partakers of his friendship. They cherished it to the very last. Even those who took exceptions to his piety could not but value his affection. It was proof against the combined influence of distance, of dissimilar pursuits, and even of time itself.

During his entire residence at Oxford Mr. Beachcroft manifested a certain auspicious regard for the principles and precepts of the gospel. He was at all times an attentive hearer in the house of God; and that not only on account of the learning, or ability, or eloquence, exhibited by the preacher, but also because of the theological knowledge he might communicate. Such apparently was the object of Mr. Beachcroft's diligent pursuit. Here we may trace a spirit of laudable inquiry, and a certain measure of discrimination, unaccompanied as

they then were with the clear view of salvation, as the purchase and the gift of Christ.

To remark that Mr. Beachcroft was also a constant communicant at the Lord's table were in fact only to affirm that he habitually conformed to long-established college rules. Like his contemporaries, he was required to be a partaker of the Lord's supper as often as it was administered in the chapel; a practice, of which the author would speak with the deference and respect due to academical superiors, but of which he must be allowed to say that it needs their further consideration in order to its complete reform. On the point at issue, namely, whether an undergraduate should be required, on pain of imposition, to present himself at the Lord's table, scarcely can there be a difference of opinion among sensible and thinking men. As mere human authority can be alleged in vindication of the practice, and as divine\* authority (so strongly urged in the communion service of our church) is most decidedly opposed to it, is it not incumbent on the University to adopt such regulations and restrictions, as shall in future exempt undergraduates from all *compulsion* to communicate?

\* 1 Cor. vi. 27, 28.



Not that Mr. Beachcroft was even then governed by that unbecoming and unchristian motive. For, while resident in college, he so far estimated the sanctity of "the Lord's supper" as commemorative of his sufferings and death, that he never partook of that sacrament without some *preparatory prayer*; a practice which, probably, originated in the admonitions of his valued mother.

A further estimate may be formed of the religious principles of Mr. Beachcroft as maintained even in his youth, if we state some interesting facts, for the truth of which the writer may confidently pledge himself. First, it appeared that Mr. Beachcroft employed himself every Sunday evening, during his continuance at Oxford, in reading "Beveridge's Private Thoughts," and "Doddridge's Rise and Progress of Religion," the volume presented to him, as we before observed, by his mother.\*

His early attention to the above treatises Mr. Beachcroft some years since himself confessed to his memorialist. Yet so secretly was

\* Both deeply serious and eminently useful works; in the latter of which the author traces, with inimitable order, the progress of the true Christian, from his first conviction of sin to his final admission into heaven.

this occupation conducted at the time, and it seems, through that "fear of man," which "bringeth a snare," that not even his most intimate associates had any suspicion of his habit. Another, and a still more important one, was his perusal of the sacred volume. That he read it occasionally, if not frequently, and even daily, is evident from that allusion to the study of it, which, on more than one occasion, he himself subsequently made.

In addition to these pleasing evidences of youthful seriousness and consideration, we must advert to a short, but still a very significant, memorandum, which occurs in a "Journal of a tour in Wales," in the year 1799, and written by Mr. Beachcroft himself. Alluding to his visit to the cathedral church at Hereford, on a sabbath-day, he notes, "Some of the choristers sung well.—*A true gospel sermon.*" An expression this which could scarcely have been used by one altogether ignorant of "the truth," and inattentive to the manner in which it was developed by the preacher.

What construction is to be put upon these early manifestations of religious principle, must be left to the decision of the reader. To the author it decidedly appears that a religious

feeling was even then silently at work in the bosom of his amiable friend; and that while others were under the control of mere natural conscience, he "felt the working of the Spirit of Christ, mortifying the works of the flesh, and drawing up the mind to high and heavenly things."\* There was something more than commonly hopeful in such developments of character as we have now noticed.

Mr. Beachcroft's intention of devoting himself to the Christian ministry was not unconnected with the above religious manifestations. That design was irrevocably formed during his college residence, and led him to pay a marked attention to such studies as were strictly theological.

Before we more particularly notice them, it may be well to lay before the reader a concise note of Mr. Beachcroft, (dated 1799,) on the 2nd volume of Milner's Church History, p. 186, a work of golden excellence. "In Ephraim's days (the Syrians) the pastoral character appeared to good men awful beyond measure; requiring little less than angelic virtue. In our days, is not conveniency and love of gain the principal motive, and decency the principal qualification?"

\* Vide Article 17.

In October 1801, he was not only a hearer of the lectures in divinity, then publicly given by the learned Bishop Randolph, but he also made such notes as proved the steadfastness of his attention to their respective subjects. A single specimen may suffice. “Lecture VII. Transition from natural to revealed religion.—Reason quite insufficient to direct men. The heathen not able to gain fixed ideas of the immortality of the soul. Till Christ brought life and immortality to light through the gospel, nothing was certain on this head. Revelation necessary to direct men how to make supplications to God. Bishop Conybeare’s *Revealed Religion*. Bishop Gibson’s *Second Pastoral Letter*. Three Revelations, Patriarchal, Jewish, Christian: the two former recorded in the books of Moses. The Jews must believe him to have been sent from God, when they saw the wonders and miracles which he wrought. The prophets were known by the nature of their predictions, and the fulfilment of them. After the Babylonish captivity a body of scriptures was drawn up for the use of the Jewish nation. The Gospel ought to have been believed by the Jews as it corresponded with their law in many respects. Miracles caused

them to give credit to Moses, and to believe him to have been sent from God. So miracles were performed by Christ, and much more astonishing ones. They exceeded those of Moses in number, in universality, and in their permanent effects. Moses was ordered by God to perform his. Christ acted according to his own will. His resurrection, majesty, and power. (Bishop Gastrell's Effects of Christianity in the age of Constantine.)" The foregoing note, taken by a youth of twenty-one years of age, may suggest no despicable hints to junior members of the University, respecting the best mode of profiting by theological lectures.

His notes on the ten first of the Thirty-nine Articles, which were then (1801) the subject of a college lecture, are no unfavourable specimen of his prevailing state of mind. The following very brief extracts may suffice.

On Art. 4. "Seeing, then, that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness; looking for and hastening unto the coming of the day of God. 2 Pet. iii. 11, 12."—  
On Art. 6. "If, therefore, a man read Scripture carefully and with an honest mind, *if he prays to God to direct him*, and follows sincerely what

he believes to be true, he will assuredly find enough to save his soul.”—On Art. 7. “He, Christ, does not slacken their force, (here Mr. Beachcroft is referring to the Ten Commandments) but enforces a strictness that reaches to *idle words*, to *passionate thoughts*, to *impure desires*, . . . . . for without holiness no man shall see the Lord.”—On Art. 10. “St. Paul says, ‘they that are in the flesh cannot please God.’ A greater than St. Paul, ‘no man can come unto me except the Father, which hath sent me, draw him.’”

The following extract from the correspondence of a legal relative of Mr. Beachcroft, (though unhappily his own replies are no where to be found,) is important in itself, and also intimately connected with the theological pursuits of the latter.

“Engaged as you will now be in the study of divinity, it has occurred to me that possibly it might be neither unpleasant nor altogether unprofitable to you, were we from time to time to communicate our sentiments upon religious subjects. You well know that I esteem theology as the most noble and interesting science. It is a wide and extensive field, through which you will have to walk, and

although the prospect may be fascinating, yet surely it is pleasant to have a companion in the way, who is interested in the delightful scenery, and to whom your feelings may be imparted without reserve. My present proposal is to proceed methodically upon the plan of study which you have adopted, or mean to adopt, as preparatory to ordination. Let us never forget that as the sublime doctrines of divinity are not to be deemed matter of theoretical speculation, but of practical utility, so its students and professors should not aim at amusing the fancy, but improving the heart."—Dated, December 13, 1801.

Referring to that residence in college, during which he prosecuted his classical and theological studies, Mr. Beachcroft thus expressed himself in a letter to a friend, written in the year 1821: "After all, it is a fiery trial; a furnace, in which we need His presence especially, who was with the three Jewish youths." Brief as these observations are on the moral dangers of youth, and on that grace which is its great preservative, they may not be altogether useless to the younger reader.

In concluding the present chapter the author feels the difficulty, if not the impossibility,

of correctly estimating the spiritual character of Mr. Beachcroft at the period now under consideration. That it was hopeful rather than decided, and exhibited the blossoms rather than the fruits of piety, was perhaps the real fact. If his singular amiableness of temper, and attention to religious forms, might possibly consist, like that of the Jewish\* youth, with an unconverted state of heart, still his secret perusal of the Bible, and of "the Rise and Progress of Religion," together with his devotional exercises, may warrant the charitable inference that grace was then beginning to exercise its influence on his affections, and to bring "every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ." To trace that happy transformation, in every stage of its progress, to the very moment of his dissolution, will be the object of the remaining chapters.

\* Matt. v. 19—22.



## CHAPTER. III.

*His marriage—Preparations for the ministry—  
Ordination.*

THAT no important period in the history of Mr. Beachcroft may be omitted, the present chapter may commence with a brief reference to his marriage. In July 1803 he was united to the eldest daughter of Mr. Devon, a highly respectable solicitor in the metropolis. In her he found a yoke-fellow who cheerfully shared with him the active labours of the ministry, and a friend, who was the instrument of his consolation amid all the trying circumstances of his last illness.

Here it may not be irrelevant to quote the observation of an aged to a younger clergyman, who was contemplating a matrimonial alliance:

“Many immortal souls are deeply interested in the step which you are now taking.” The partner of a Christian minister cannot be a neutral character. If not a help, she is a hindrance; if not a blessing, (it might almost be affirmed,) she is a curse.

As before his marriage, so after that event, Mr. Beachcroft diligently pursued his course of theological study with a view to his intended ordination. And though the documents relating to that study are somewhat deficient as to dates, it may be collected from a MS. which has been put into the author's hands, that between January 1802, when Mr. Beachcroft had lately left the university of Oxford, to November 1803, when he was ordained deacon, he was bent on acquiring such stores of professional learning, as might be alike profitable to himself and to his future official charge. The MS. in question consists of a series of notes, carefully made by Mr. Beachcroft, on Bishop Pearson's\* two very learned and excellent volumes on the Creed. In those notes it may be seen that Mr. Beachcroft was not actuated by the mere thirst

\* The original copy of the above work is a single small folio.

of a theologian, but that he also cherished the holy affections of a Christian.

Some short extracts from his notes on the second article in the (Apostles') Creed, slightly as in truth they vary from the very phraseology of the Bishop, are still so direct and pointed, in their reference to "the love of Christ," that they cannot be uninteresting to those who are experimentally acquainted with its power. In note second, Mr. Beachcroft thus expresses himself: "There is . . . . no other Saviour but Jesus by which we can be saved; and no way to be saved by Him, but by believing in Him. It is necessary that we rejoice in the name of Jesus as that in which all our happiness is involved—(thus far the language is almost exclusively Mr. Beachcroft's.) Should it not inflame our affection, and kindle our love toward Him, engaging us to hate all things in respect of Him, that is, so far as they are in opposition to Him, or pretend to an equal share of affection with Him, . . . . that we may be raised to the true temper of St. Paul, who counted all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord." A still shorter extract from Mr. Beachcroft's third

note, on the Apostles' Creed may be sufficient. "Let every one that names the name of Christ depart from iniquity." Except such reformation accompany our profession, there is no advantage in the appellation; nor can we be honoured with that title while we dishonour him that gives it. We can have no share in Him as Jesus except we become truly Christians; and so be in him as Christ; anointed with that unction from the Holy One."

The author learned by his occasional conversations with Mr. Beachcroft, that as he particularly studied, so he derived great profit, and exquisite pleasure, from the pages of Bishop Pearson. When writing on theological subjects to a candidate for holy orders, Mr. Beachcroft took occasion to observe, "In them (that is, in the two volumes on the Apostles' Creed) you will discover many glowing passages of true divinity." "Stillingfleet's *Origines Sacræ*," "Prideaux's *Connexions*," "Leslie on Deism," "Burnet's *Pastoral Care*," were among the volumes which he explored as able, learned, and peculiarly useful to one, who was himself about to advocate the cause of Revelation. He also assiduously read the pages of that commentator (Matthew Henry) who abounds in the most

solid, beautiful, and spiritual illustrations of the sacred text; alloyed, as confessedly they are, with a certain diffuseness of style and an occasional quaintness of expression. Yet Mr. Beachcroft was far from paying an undue deference to his opinions. They were adopted only so far as they coincided, in his settled judgment, with "the mind of the Spirit." Well he knew that the expositor is not to be set on a level with the author of Revelation. While on this sober principle, he had recourse to *Henry* at one time, to *Scott* at another, (of whose lucid and faithful commentary no disparagement is intended by the foregoing observations,) or explored the learned pages of Bishops Lowth and Patrick, he might be said to apply the exposition to its proper use; namely, to remove those well-known difficulties of Scripture, which arise from the many peculiarities of the Hebrew language; from local circumstances; from historical allusions; and not least of all, from that distance of time and place, at which "holy men of old spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." Here we design to obviate a plausible objection, which has been sometimes urged against all use whatever of commentaries on the sacred text; namely,

that it leads us to defer to the exposition rather than to the Scripture. Directly opposite to this (as appears by his letter quoted in the 1st chapter, p. 10,) was the uniform practice of Mr. Beachcroft. As a true believer in the Bible, he subscribed to no one interpretation of any part of its contents that had not first been submitted to its sacred standard.

As the period of his ordination approached, Mr. Beachcroft generally resided under the roof of his venerable mother. There he enjoyed those ample opportunities of retirement from a corrupt world, which (as Bishop Horne has admirably shown in his Treatise on "John the Baptist,"\*) are so essential to those who are destined for the sacred office. There "he passed his mornings in theological study," and devotional employment. Possible, as, alas! it is, that a candidate for holy orders should employ such valuable leisure in studies that are wholly secular, or at best, speculatively theological, it is impossible that, if deprived of it, he should acquire that depth of thought, that conception of the worth of souls, that familiarity with Holy Scripture, that acquaintance with his own heart, that habit of intense prayer, and above

\* A very small volume.

all, that prevailing sense of the nearness of eternity, and of the unspeakable value of a Saviour, without which a minister of Christ is utterly unqualified for his vast and awful charge.

That Mr. Beachcroft's motive in making choice of the clerical profession was not a regard to its emoluments was happily beyond a doubt. Though his doctrinal conceptions unquestionably were not matured, he was, nevertheless, preserved from that grovelling spirit of speculation, which would secure to itself wealth, and ease and temporal distinction in the church, at the expense of the eternal welfare of immortal souls; and which is abundantly satisfied when these objects are attained. Mr. Beachcroft, on the contrary, identified the seals of his ministry with the truest wealth, and the only valuable honour. In his breast the delusive notion, that "good abilities are thrown away by entering the church," could find no room whatever. Well he knew, that should her minister never be permitted to rise above the lowest rank, still (as he is reminded by the Bishop in the solemn hour of ordination) he is "*the messenger of the Lord of Hosts.*" And is it a degradation, or, in any sense, a misapplica-

tion of the brightest talent to undertake *such* an office? Again; as "an ambassador," he has to "pray" men, in Christ's stead, "be ye reconciled to God." And can we consider ourselves to have missed of honour in having been made by him the instruments of *such* a reconciliation? Or can it be a prostitution of intellect, however splendid or distinguished, to be conversant with the noblest verities? Was the genius of a Plato, or a Tully, dignified by their philosophical researches, and can an opposite effect be produced by communion with God in the closet, in the bosom of his ministers? And if, at the last, they can address their people in the following emphatic language, "Ye are our joy and crown of rejoicing," will they judge their time misspent, or their talents misemployed?

Of what passed in Mr. Beachcroft's mind, when about to be made "overseer" of the flock of Christ, no particular record has been preserved. Yet from the diligence of his preparatory studies, the increasing seriousness of his general religious views, and from his subsequent deportment, as deacon of the Church of England, the fair presumption is that he now gave himself to prayer and much solemn medi-



tation on his future office. When, therefore, he came before the Bishop in November 1803, Mr. Beachcroft might reply with self-abasement, but still with sincerity, to the question then proposed by the ordaining prelate, "Do you trust that you are inwardly moved by the Holy Ghost to take this office upon you?" "*I trust so;*" and could heartily join in the beautiful hymn of the Church of England,

" Come, Holy Ghost, our hearts inspire,  
And lighten with celestial fire !"

Mr. Beachcroft would have indignantly rejected those modern, and too prevailing, glosses which would make such scriptural expressions to signify no more than this—that a minister is to be sound in creed, and decorous in behaviour; and which treat, as visionary and enthusiastic, the idea of its being possible to perceive the inward operations of the Spirit. Against *such* an exposition of her language, the friend of the Church of England must strongly and decidedly protest.

For her Liturgy, in exact accordance with the tone and the spirit of revelation, directs us to pray for "the inspiration of the Holy Spirit." Her articles (as we have already seen)

recognize a certain *sense* of his gracious operations on the soul, as one characteristic mark of "the elect people of God." And, surely, if there be a time when (to use the words of the exuberant and learned Barrow\*) "God by his gentle whispers calleth us, or by his soft impulses draweth us into his presence," it must be when we "vow unto the Lord" that we will "give ourselves wholly to our office," as his *watchmen*, his *stewards*, his *messengers* to the sons of men; yea, as the very "*ambassadors* for Christ." Then no thought of the ministerial character can be too high; no feelings of contrition, of unworthiness, of love to God, too strong; no purpose of fidelity to Jesus Christ too inflexible; no supplication for the influence of the Holy Spirit too intense. The pious candidate for ordination has been sometimes ready to sink beneath the weight of his responsibility, when receiving his divine commission. And, if the anxiety of a pilot† be commended, who

\* Vol. i. folio, p. 52.

† While preparing these sheets for the press, the deeply affecting tale of the loss of the Rothsay steam-packet near Liverpool, and nearly of all the crew, (above one hundred persons,) appeared in the public papers. Who did not learn with horror that the drunkenness of the pilot was

has to steer a valuable ship through a long and perilous voyage, is their anxiety to be censured, who are intrusted with the souls of men, and who have to give account of them to God ? To be careless at such a moment, or to fix our thoughts on the *emoluments* of the sacred office, while with our lips we publicly pledge ourselves to fulfil its *duties*, were an instance of fatuity the most strange, if not of obduracy the most fearful.

Such were, in fact, the settled opinions of Mr. Beachcroft, as subsequently developed in the course of a visitation sermon, to which we shall presently refer. He had also a strong impression of the evils connected with the custom, still too prevalent in our church, of candidates for orders *passing their time at an inn* during that period of examination, which, in some instances, embraces an entire week. The practice has frequently been lamented by the candidates themselves, on account of the hindrance which it presents to prayer and holy meditation ; and of that dissipation of thought,

the immediate cause of that calamity ? Let the reader draw his own inference respecting the retribution that awaits the ungodly and the worldly minister of Jesus Christ.

which it is too much calculated to produce. Difficulties would unavoidably occur in the attempt to do away a custom so rooted and pernicious. Yet such difficulties can scarcely be insurmountable. That a discerning public has animadverted on the practice under consideration is a fact as clear as it is important.

The commencement of Mr. Beachcroft's ministry, as curate of Tottenham, Middlesex, will be the subject of the next chapter.

## CHAPTER IV.

*His exemplary diligence as Curate of Tottenham—The success of his ministerial labours.*

MR. BEACHCROFT had no sooner received his first ministerial commission from the hands of “the holy Porteus,” in November 1803, (thus, in a private memorandum, he describes that venerable prelate,) than he undertook the labours of his office; “not by constraint, but willingly—not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind.” The parish, allotted to him as curate, was very populous and extensive, and consequently one that furnished an ample field of exertion to a young minister. Not that he was left alone. His vicar resided on the spot, and shared with him the regular labours of the ministry.

Mr. Beachcroft now proved himself a minister of no ordinary promise. Not only (as the author has learned from a competent eye-witness of his conduct) diligence in labour, respect for his ecclesiastical superiors, and a becoming deference to the opinions and wishes of his vicar; but, moreover, a zealous attention to the spiritual interests of the children of the Sunday-school, bespoke a lively conscience, a meek and lowly spirit, and a deep sense of the transcendent value of the soul.

But the reader may expect a somewhat definite account of the scriptural views of Mr. Beachcroft, as maintained in his public addresses to his new flock. Here the tenderness of friendship must neither hide nor veil the truth. And "the truth" is, that Mr. Beachcroft indicated a holy fervor rather than a clear perception of the great verities of Christianity. His heart appeared to have felt the influence of "the Sun of Righteousness," before his understanding\* was, in a strict sense, enlightened by its sacred beams. He aimed

\* The author once heard it remarked by an aged and devoted clergyman, when adverting to a similar instance, "God in some cases first takes possession of the *head*, in others of the *heart*."

In the same discourse, Mr. Beachcroft speaks of the wondrous work of our redemption ; “our blessed Lord came to seek and to save those who were lost. He came to blot out the handwriting which was against us ; to redeem us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us. He came to purchase an eternity of happiness for all who are willing to embrace the means of salvation, which he himself has prescribed.”

Yet, with all that pastoral anxiety which pervades the whole discourse, Mr. Beachcroft almost overlooks that *faith*, by which, as an instrument, the sinner is pardoned and accepted, in the only Saviour. “Add to our *faith* virtue,” is almost the only allusion contained in the sermon before us, to the necessity of “looking unto Jesus.” And what makes the omission more remarkable is the language which immediately follows, relative to human virtue ; and which, though unquestionably warranted by certain passages in Scripture, does not fairly represent the general doctrine of Revelation. “The practice of virtue, in the Scripture sense of the word, is attended not only with present quiet and satisfaction, *but with the comfortable hope of a future recompence.*”

In a subsequent page, Mr. Beachcroft thus speaks:—"Let us keep a strict watch over ourselves, by frequent self-examination; that our *demeanor, in this state of probation and trial, may, through the merits of Christ, obtain the favour and acceptance of our Judge.* Be solicitous to abound in such works as, you are told, will particularly distinguish men on that day." And, though the preacher presently adds, "take no praise to yourselves; after the most careful and industrious performance of your duty, humbly confess that you are unprofitable servants," he observes, in the close of the discourse, "the uncertainty of the time of our Lord's second advent should lead us immediately *to reconcile ourselves to God by a sincere and hearty repentance, that we may not be found unprepared.*"

Now, true as it unquestionably is, that *repentance and salvation* are connected, as correlatives, in Holy Scripture, and that there is "the *recompence of reward,*" it is not less true, that being justified by *faith*,\* we have peace with

\* To those who may here refer to the apparently opposite language of St. James, (ii. 21,) "Was not Abraham our father justified by *works*?" it may not unseasonably be remarked, that the apostle adds in the 23rd verse, "Abraham *believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness.*"



God through our Lord Jesus Christ ;” and that “*not* by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy He saved us.”

It is often urged, in vindication of such doctrinal statements as were *then* adopted by Mr. Beachcroft, “It is of course implied that we are saved by Christ only, and that no man, educated as a Christian, can be ignorant of so plain a point.” Yet the fact is, that whatever be the intentions of the preacher who uses the phraseology in question, the hearer is prone to misunderstand it, and at most to consider the merits of our great Redeemer as that without which our own personal righteousness were not *quite* sufficient to satisfy the demands of God. Such false and dangerous notions (as the author’s experience fully enables him to testify) prevail in every mind that is not yet conversant with Scripture, nor enlightened by the Holy Spirit. And to this hour *the inscriptions on tombs* exalt the virtues of the deceased, without any reference whatever to the merits of the only Saviour.

The imperfection of Mr. Beachcroft’s views relative to the justification of a sinner yet more strikingly appeared in the *charity sermons* which he preached at the period now under

consideration. Candour demands of the biographer a plain admission of the fact, while it also claims for his friend a due recollection of the difficulty of advocating the cause of charity without sacrificing more or less the interests of Christian truth, and that by investing beneficence with certain irresistible title to the forgiveness of sin here, and eternal blessedness hereafter.

When setting forth those scripture promises which apply to the *charitable* man, the preacher must be singularly cautious if he would avoid the mistaken inference, that "alms make an atonement for sin." How far Mr. Beachcroft fell short of that necessary caution will be seen in the following quotation, which, to say the least, is not less amiable in spirit than erroneous in doctrine.

Having observed in the beginning of his discourse, that "*those who have shown mercy, shall find mercy from him,*" (Jesus Christ;) "*that the practice of charity will be the great test by which we shall be judged;*" Mr. Beachcroft remarks, in conclusion, "In that day, when the shadow of death shall compass you about, and all the vanities of the world shall fade away, when all earthly comfort shall

forsake you, when pleasure shall no longer delight, nor power be able to protect; in that dreadful hour shall the man whose care has been extended to the general happiness of mankind, whose charity has rescued poverty from the grave, and innocence from destruction, *find favour in the sight of the great Author of society, and his recompence shall flow upon him from the fountain of mercy; he shall stand without fear on the brink of life, and pass into eternity with an humble hope of finding that mercy which he has never denied.*"

It may be said that the foregoing doctrine has its foundation in the words of Jesus Christ. "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy." But could our Lord possibly intend that by relieving the poor and needy, we necessarily secure our own admission into heaven? On the contrary, he teaches us by his apostle that we may "give *all our goods to feed the poor*, and yet be wholly deficient in the grace of *charity*."\* They, therefore, are to be regarded as "the merciful," who have been led, by the contemplation of the cross, to love and pity their fellow-creatures; and to do good even to their enemies. *Such* mercy takes its rise in an

\* 1 Cor. xiii. 3.

humble dependence upon that of Jesus Christ, and therefore shall be graciously acknowledged and freely recompensed by him, on his return to judge the world. To such an exposition of the words above referred to Mr. Beachcroft himself, in the subsequent periods of his ministry, would not have hesitated to subscribe. Nor should we have detained the reader upon the point, were not the popular delusion relative to the reward of *charity* of a fearfully pernicious tendency.\* Where “the silver and the gold” are relied on as not only a sacrifice for sin, but also as a title to salvation, an opiate is thereby administered to the troubled and accusing conscience. Evil tempers are indulged; unholy passions are let loose; and “the pomps and vanities of this world” are eagerly pursued; and why?—because “*charity covereth a multitude of sins.*” It will indeed cast a mantle over the infirmities of a Christian brother, but it will hide no one sin from the glance of an all-seeing

\* It is a remarkable fact, that even the Homily “On Alms Deeds” lends some countenance to the doctrine, that human compassion purges away human guilt; a doctrine evidently derived from certain writings of the church from which our reformers separated.

eye, nor screen a single sinner from the stroke of an Almighty arm.

Yet, agreeably to the gracious promise of our blessed Lord, "he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life,"\* the subject of this memoir, towards the close of his ministry at Tottenham, discovered an improving insight into "the things that accompany salvation." Its divine Author was more distinctly and prominently set forth in some of the last discourses there delivered by Mr. Beachcroft. We subjoin a short extract from that preached on 1 Cor. ii. 2, dated May 18, 1806, when he was preparing to leave Tottenham. "There is no remedy so safe against the pollutions of the world, no means so effectual to escape from them, as the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. On this knowledge our faith is built. Hence it is that we are said to be "justified by faith," to be "saved by faith." Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that *believeth* that Jesus is the Son of God? And therefore to know Jesus Christ and him crucified is the primary and necessary introduction to a state of

\* John viii. 12.

happiness." When a young clergyman could thus "preach the word," he was evidently growing in grace, and ripening in the knowledge of Christ.

But it is time to ask, "How did Mr. Beachcroft acquit himself in the capacity of parish-priest? As on this part of his character we shall more particularly dwell in a following chapter, we shall here speak somewhat generally. His pastoral visits, more especially to his poor neighbours, his tender ministrations to the sick, the aged, and the dying, and his indefatigable attention to the interests of the parish school, evinced no slight anxiety to promote the end of his calling, even the salvation of his flock. Ease, self-indulgence, and the mere shadow of religion, thrown over a worldly life, were altogether foreign to his mind. From him, even at that period, every young minister might learn "to renounce the pomps and vanities of this evil world;" and to spend his time and talents in unceasing reference to his last and great account. In the path of ministerial labour, Mr. Beachcroft both sought and found his dearest happiness. His deportment generally illustrated the saying of his heavenly.

you, but when a single siner from the stroke of a lightning etc.

Let attention to the gracious promise of our blessed Lord, "he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life," the subject of this memoir, towards the close of his ministry at Tottenhain, discovered an improving insight into "the things that accompany salvation." His divine Author was more distinctly and prominently set forth in some of his last discourses there delivered by Mr. Beckett. We subjoin a short extract from the sermon on 1 Cor. ii. 9, dated May 15, 1808, when he was preparing to leave Tottenham. "There is no remedy so safe against the seductions of the world, no means so effectual to escape from them, as the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. In this knowledge our faith is built. Hence it is that we are said to be "justified by faith," and to be "saved by faith." Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God? And therefore to know Jesus-Christ and him crucified is the primary and necessary introduction to a state of

\* John viii. 12.

ST. JOHN'S BAPTIST CHURCH, 1897.

men? When a young man comes  
"preach the word of the Lord"  
ing in crime, and turning to the arms  
of Christ.

but it is time to ask: How did Mr. [Name]  
acquaint himself with the community? [Name]  
As on this part of his narrative we  
al more particularly dwell in [Name]  
ter, we find some most [Name]  
y. His pastime with more [Name]  
w neighbours, his [Name]  
s, the aged, and the young, and his [Name]  
able attention to the interests of [Name]  
and, evident to slight [Name]  
al of his calling, [Name]  
ack. [Name] [Name]  
shadow of religion, [Name]  
were altogether [Name]  
men at their [Name]  
[Name] [Name]  
this evil world, [Name]  
talents in [Name]  
great [Name]  
hour, Mr. [Name]  
his dearest [Name]  
rally illustrated the [Name]



Master, "My yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

Of the *example* of Mr. Beachcroft, it might without exaggeration be affirmed, that, amidst the infirmities of nature, it still strikingly exhibited the sanctifying power of grace. It is observed by one well qualified to speak on the subject, "He owed no man any thing, but love ; he was punctual in all his relative and social duties ; as a child, he was dutiful and respectful ; as a husband, tender and affectionate ; as a master, kind ; he could not reprove—it overcame him ; as a friend, sincere ; as a guardian, anxious and alive to the interests of those committed to him ; to the poor an affectionate father, always relieving their wants to the utmost ; he could not pass a beggar without giving him relief." To the ready, the consistent performance of these Christian duties Mr. Beachcroft was clearly impelled by the principle of love to God. A prevailing reverence for his name ; (so often taken\* in vain, even by the amiable and up-

\* Mr. Addison's paper (the 531st) upon the subject might be profitably consulted by such violators of the third commandment, and might lead them to *think* ere they utter the name of the supreme Being in the common

right;) a delight in the Sabbath as a day of communion with God; the daily study of the Bible; a morning and evening ministration at the domestic altar; and a truly Christian temper, were among the evidences of his faith, and the credentials of his sacred embassy.

Here the reader must pardon the anachronism of adverting to a circumstance that occurred about a year subsequent to Mr. Beachcroft's removal from Tottenham; since by that circumstance it appeared that his early ministerial labours were "not in vain in the Lord." "Many of the poor," on that occasion, "stopped his horse as he rode through, and confessed that it was he who first led them to the Saviour." The above anecdote may prove that, when the heart of a minister is bent on glorifying God, in the eternal salvation of his flock, be his views of Christian doctrine as imperfect as they may, success is occasionally granted to his zealous labours. This observation is designed, not to merge the distinction between the clear and cloudy development of sacred

expletives and exclamations of "Good God!" "God bless me!" "Lord have mercy upon me!" &c. &c. &c. Mr. Addison speaks of "the *horror* and *profaneness* of such a practice."

truths, but rather to encourage those who lament their inability to state them with due order and perspicuity; and who mourn as they recollect the day, when, like the quondam curate of Tottenham, their zeal was sincere and fervid, but their "preaching of the cross" defective.

## CHAPTER V.

*His presentation to the Rectory of Blunham.—  
His commencement of Residence.—His devotedness to Ministerial Duties.*

THE valuable living of Blunham, in the county of Bedford, was now presented to Mr. Beachcroft by his early and much esteemed friend, Lord Grantham. And (as the event proved) rarely has a church patron been more happy in the exercise of his prerogative. The presentation took place in the spring of 1806; and in the course of the succeeding summer Mr. Beachcroft commenced his residence in that important field of labour. The population of the parish was not less than one thousand; two hamlets were attached to it; and as it was considerably extended, so it demanded of the

rector no small share of zeal, of activity, of perseverance. These pastoral qualifications were not only possessed by Mr. Beachcroft, but were also brought into speedy and efficient operation.

His sabbath labours were distinguished by an increase of pastoral anxiety and Christian love, and by a still gradual improvement in his views of Christian doctrine. Accordingly his congregation was very sensibly augmented, especially in the afternoon service, and the attention of the neighbourhood in general seemed to be directed towards him, as a zealous, a devoted, an useful minister of Christ. His name was soon endeared to all who "love the truth," and who make this their leading petition at a throne of grace, "Thy kingdom come."

*Now* (as we shall have occasion to show by quotations in the next chapter) he proceeded more clearly, more fully, more consistently, to "preach Christ crucified." Whatever had before obscured his view of that glorious Redeemer was now gradually yielding to the influences of divine grace. And without undertaking to point to the precise period when he might be said to know "the way of God more perfectly," it seems that Mr. Beachcroft arrived at that happy consummation in the course of

two years after his establishment in Bedfordshire.

Before we more specifically advert to his active and earnest superintendence of his new charge, we may notice the very opposite opinions not unlikely to be formed relative to his ministry at Tottenham and its earlier periods at Blunham. To one class of observers it may appear that, being so imperfectly acquainted with the grace of Christ, he was then scarcely to be regarded as, in any sense, a faithful minister. In another quarter it may be maintained, that as Mr. Beachcroft, when curate of Tottenham, occasionally recognized the doctrines of the Christian revelation, he was, even then, a sound, enlightened, orthodox divine, and that it were little short of fanaticism to talk of his farther illumination in "the things of God."

To the former animadversions we may reply that he, who is even moderately acquainted with his own heart, well knows his natural ignorance of sacred truths, the prejudices that blind his judgment, the corrupt feelings and affections that increase his moral darkness, the hindrances to his full attainment of Christian knowledge that arise from local circumstances and peculiar connexions; his dulness and slowness

of apprehension on divine subjects; his long struggles with error prior to his unclouded perception of revealed truth. Add to this the absolute dependence of the most enlightened on "the teaching of the Holy Spirit"\* for power to understand and expound, to any good purpose, the simplest verities of Scripture. It is *God* that "calls us out of darkness into his marvellous light." He that thus regards the point now under consideration will tenderly visit the deficiencies that marked the earlier ministrations of a "man of God;" and the more "tenderly" when he recollects that those luminous representations of the *fall* and the *recovery* of man, which characterize the present day, were rare in the less favoured period when Mr. Beachcroft received his first lessons in religion. And, strongly as we would contend for the importance of correct views of Christian doctrine, we may still adopt the sage observation of Bishop Hall, "A little holiness is better than much illumination."

It may be submitted to the latter remonstrant that, whether we refer to Revelation or consult

\* Accordingly said a giant in intellect, (Bishop Horsley, Sermon on James v. 8, p. 3,) "I trust that, *by God's assistance*, I shall be able to state my argument."

the doctrinal standard of the established church, it will be found that a gradual transition from darkness to light, or from comparative ignorance of the grace of Jesus Christ to a clear and full perception of it, is not the creature of "fanaticism." And, though some have thought fit to stigmatize it as "the new light," in contradistinction to that which pervades the formularies of the church of England, the stigma is utterly unmerited. For "the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day."\* Again the disciples offered this supplication to their Master, "increase our faith."† An apostle also directs us to "*grow* in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."‡ The same doctrine meets us in our own incomparable Liturgy;—"From all *blindness* of heart, good Lord deliver us." "That it may please thee to *illuminate* the minds of all bishops and curates." In the collect for St. James's day, we pray that we may "*perfectly* know thy Son Jesus Christ to be the way, the truth, and the life." In the collect for the 14th Sunday after Trinity, we implore "an *increase* of faith, hope, and charity." And in the "consecration

\* Prov. iv. 18.

† Luke xvii. 5.

‡ 2 Peter iii. 18.



service the very fathers of our church bind themselves by a solemn promise to "call upon God by prayer for *the true understanding* of the same," the Scriptures. Reason will lend her testimony in support of the doctrine which we are considering. In every branch of secular knowledge, whether historical, literary, or scientific, the advance of the human mind is not rapid, but slow, not instantaneous, but gradual; and, even to the end of his days, the philosopher contemplates a certain progress in his acquirements. Why, then, should the Christian be stationary in his knowledge of Christ Jesus the Lord? Why should the enlargement of his faith be regarded as a vision of enthusiasm?

Having thus claimed for Mr. Beachcroft the charitable indulgence of the reader, we may resume the history of his public ministrations at Blunham. Punctuality in observing the appointed hour of service, and regularity in performing the stated duties of the sanctuary, were in truth his lowest praise. A decorous and reverent behaviour, when entering the house of God, was among his lesser characteristics. It costs a clergyman but little to attend to such mere circumstantialia relating to his sacred office. Yet, to prove that even the deportment of a

minister, when officiating in public, is very far from unimportant, the following anecdote may be related.\* Garrick, the celebrated actor, once asked his friend, Dr. Stedman, on his coming out of a church in the city, "What particular business he had to do when the duty was over?" "None," said the other. "I thought you had," said Garrick, "on seeing you enter the reading-desk in such a hurry. Nothing," added he, "can be more indecent than to see a clergyman set about sacred business, as if he were a tradesman, and go into the church as if he wanted to get out of it as soon as possible." He next asked the doctor, "What books he had in the desk before him." "Only the Bible and Prayer-book."—"Only the Bible and Prayer-book!" replied the player; "why you tossed them backwards and forwards, and turned the leaves as carelessly, as if they were those of a day-book, or ledger." The doctor was wise enough to see the force of these observations, and in future he avoided the faults they were designed to reprove.

Had Garrick been alive to scrutinize the subject of the present memoir, he would easily have stood the trial. His mode of commencing, of continuing, of concluding, both the services

\* Life of Job Orton, vol. ii. p. 53.

of the Sabbath, testified to his deep sense of the presence and majesty of God. His manner was earnest and unaffected; his spirit evidently moved in unison with his lips, and gave a striking effect to the admirable language of the prayer-book. Addison has somewhere said, that a gentleman, on hearing the Liturgy once read with unusual devotion, remarked that never till then had he discovered its excellencies and beauties. Even so it might have been said of Mr. Beachcroft—the Liturgy was never more devotional than when it proceeded from his lips. He so lived in communion with God that his public were in fact the echo of his private supplications. He dreaded the very appearance of ministering with carelessness or irreverence at a throne of grace.

A similar observation might be made on the impressiveness with which he read the appointed lessons of the church. No haste, no indifference, no such mistake as springs from the occupation or absorption of the mind in earthly matters, was then apparent in Mr. Beachcroft. On the contrary, he knew and felt *whose* word he was reading in the ears of his fellow-men, and what effect it was calculated to produce upon their hearts and consciences, even a divine conversion from folly to wisdom, from sor-

row to joy, from darkness to light.\* Thus he obviated a charge not unfrequently, though unjustly, preferred against the zealous minister; namely, that he hurries through the lessons in order to give more effect to his subsequent addresses from the pulpit. Mr. Beachcroft was so abhorrent from the practice that he rather hoped, under God, to strengthen his discourses on Scripture by reading the portions selected from it with uniform solemnity and earnestness. Nor could it escape a careful observer that the congregation most attentively heard the lessons thus seriously read.

With the same exemplary spirit Mr. Beachcroft regulated *the Psalmody*. Of his practice in this department, a detailed account was formerly written by himself, and inserted in the "Christian Observer" for June, 1826. The following are extracts: "I feel it my duty, as an old incumbent, to offer a few plain observations, the result of long experience, on that very important point, (Village Psalmody.) It has been frequently, and I think justly observed, that the state of a congregation may be known by its singing: for when persons are really thankful for the blessings which they enjoy under a truly

\* Ps. xix. 7, 8, 9, &c.

scriptural ministry, they will find pleasure in uniting most heartily with him who is appointed to watch over their souls, in ascribing praise and glory and thanksgiving to God. The various members in that little ecclesiastical body, the village church, will all be employed according to their ability. ‘The eye will not say to the head, I have no need of thee; nor the head to the feet, I have no need of you.’ . . . . Our parochial ministers perhaps often increase their own difficulties by imagining them to be much greater than they really are. The point may be carried, and the Psalmody improved, and rendered sufficiently good for every purpose of devotion, by the kind and affectionate interference of the rector or curate. ‘The great secret in all parochial improvement is to know how to gain the affections of the people. A truly anxious pastor may gently lead them to any point of duty, by going before them and walking with them, as a shepherd accompanying his flock. But in such a matter as singing, which must, if fervent, proceed from the heart, he cannot and must not employ compulsion.” Again says Mr. Beachcroft, “if he (the minister) uses in his church the old or the new version of the Psalms of David, he will carefully make choice

of such passages as are the most profitable. He will unite certain well-known tunes to certain well-known words, so that the people may be acquainted with the tune the moment they hear the words given out by the clerk. If again the minister adopts any of those numerous selections which are now in use in many of our churches, he must still exercise the same judgment in the choice of words; for many of these selections need to be again and again revised. . . . Having taken his stand, as it respects his book and his well-known tunes, the minister will endeavour to familiarize the Psalms to his congregation.

“ To this end in his study he would, during the week, commit to paper the psalms, and the names of the tunes, and give his directions to the clerk and to the village schoolmaster. Such a regular habit of practising the psalms would be introduced as would lead the children in a few months to form a little choir of themselves.” Of the clergyman’s wife, he adds, “ Presiding, as of course she would wish to do, over the Sunday school, she opens the interesting morning employments of that holy day with prayer and praise. She may practise the children in that very tune which is subsequently to be sung

in the congregation. . . . A spirit of psalm-singing spreads imperceptibly . . . . Some of the parishioners will express a wish to sing in parts ; others to introduce anthems ; a taste will be displayed for tunes altogether unsuitable to the service of the sanctuary. A variety of instruments will find their way into the gallery, and the women with good voices will be invited to sit in that part of the church. As it respects the instruments, the minister will, to say the least, regulate their use . . . . And, as to the assemblage of young women in the gallery, he will put a decided veto upon the attempt. . . . Modesty may be extinguished under the pretext of adding to the devotional harmony.

“ If the parishioners could contrive to purchase by subscription a small *organ*, (at the very mention of the organ I can almost fancy the sainted Horne, or Jones, looking down upon me,) even twenty-four good, well chosen tunes upon an organ, would lead to the happiest consequences. Let us duly cultivate such employments in the church on earth as we are assured will find a place in the church triumphant in heaven.”—R. P. B.

Here Mr. Beachcroft evidently stopped not

to inquire what would please the ear, or gratify the taste, or even meet the prejudices of his people; (though no man could perhaps surpass him in studying the art of conciliation;) but he, principally, asked, "What kind of psalmody will most effectually honour God and prepare his people to bear their part in the purity and fervour of celestial worship? Therefore Mr. Beachcroft made use of that excellent compilation of psalms and hymns which the late Mr. Cecil presented to his own flock. Conscientiously as Mr. Beachcroft regarded canonical and rubrical authority, he still properly distinguished between the prayers as *sanctioned* by parliament, and the psalms (the singing psalms) as subsequently *affixed* to them at the mere discretion of the printer; or, at most, indirectly claiming the sanction of an act of parliament passed in the days of king James.\* And whatever offences against taste, or even against sound doctrine, may *sometimes* have been detected and exposed in modern hymns, Mr. Beachcroft was well aware that similar defects are discoverable in the old version; there-

\* Vide Christian Observer for July 1822, p. 420, in which the present point is fully and fairly discussed.



fore, with that discreet zeal which adorns the Christian character, he allowed his singers to make use of *psalms* and *hymns*, as the occasion admitted or required.

A passing reference may be made to his practice of publicly *catechizing* his village school; a school which might justly be said to have been remodelled, and enlarged, and rendered eminently useful, by means of his liberal support and personal exertions. Mr. Beachcroft usually catechized the children after the afternoon service. Thus, while he compelled none to listen to it as an extra service, he afforded to all an opportunity of hearing that simple formula, which so well condenses the substance of divine truth, and which, having been familiar in childhood, is on that account endeared to us in maturer age. Many of the congregation remained as the children both repeated it and replied to the questions proposed by their minister relative to its subject matter. This part of the afternoon service was not without its interest; and the general behaviour of the children might also warrant the presumption that it was not without its due effect.

Though Mr. Beachcroft's preaching was generally noticed in a former part of the chapter,

the subject is so ample and important as to demand further consideration. Therefore the succeeding chapter will be entirely devoted to the subject.

## CHAPTER VI.

*The subject and character of his Preaching.*

As two volumes of "Plain, Scriptural Discourses" were published by Mr. Beachcroft, in the year 1816, it may, perhaps, appear unnecessary to enter on the present topic. From such an opinion, however, we beg permission to dissent; partly because printed sermons, unless unusually excellent in all respects, have a somewhat limited circulation; and partly, because they can convey to us but a faint and inadequate idea of those which are orally delivered. Certain important advantages are incident to the latter; such as the countenance, the manner, the tone, the feeling, and the action; together with the force and influence of holy example in the preacher.

Indeed the "Memoir" would be unfaithful, did it leave the reader uninformed as to the

subjects and character of Mr. Beachcroft's preaching. To begin with the former, they were truly, if not peculiarly, scriptural. In selecting his matter, and in arranging its component parts, the Bible was evidently either in his hands or thoughts. That morality which, as it stands aloof from the mighty motives of Christianity, is, in truth, as cold as it is beautiful; and which, when substituted for gospel verities, so ill becomes the pages of the Christian theologian,\* had therefore its proper place assigned it by Mr. Beachcroft. He uniformly made it, not the foundation, but the superstructure; and by so doing, materially improved its character and enhanced its value. "Christ crucified" was his theme; and that either principally or entirely, according to existing circumstances. On that he dwelt, not as a tautologous declaimer, but as a teacher, a reprover, a helper, a comforter to his people. Such, with whatever imperfections, he became, through grace, on his attaining to clearer views of the gospel dispensation. To borrow an illustration from a distinguished Irish theologian,† from

\* Blair and Seed, with all their elegance of style, are guilty of such a substitution in a remarkable degree.

† Skelton.

that time Mr. Beachcroft's discourses were "died in the blood of the Redeemer." They were "begun, continued, and ended in Him!"

It were inconsistent with candour to deny, (what was justly, but perhaps severely, remarked by "the Christian Observer,\* in its Review of Mr. Beachcroft's Discourses,") that his subjects were sometimes too fancifully chosen: The above fault has not unfrequently been remarked in the following *titles* and *texts*, that appear in his published sermons:—"The Master's Call;" John ii. 28—"The Master is come, and calleth for thee." "Our Brother a Mediator;" Genesis xliii. 3—"Ye shall not see my face, except your brother be with you." "Jacob's going into Egypt a figure of Death;" Genesis xlv. 3, 4—"Fear not to go down into Egypt, for I will there make of thee a great nation; I will go down with thee into Egypt, and I will also surely bring thee up again." Mr. Beachcroft had apparently learned the above unsound mode of choosing and applying texts of no less illustrious divines than Bishop Hall, Bishop Horne, and William Jones; since with their respective writings, in which it remarkably prevails, Mr. Beachcroft was parti-

\* Vol. xvi. p. 310.—No. for May.

cularly conversant. This reference, however, is designed not to justify, but to account for, that peculiarity which we have now noticed, and which can never be warranted by any name or authority whatever. A lively and glowing imagination seems thus far to have impeded the exercise of that sound judgment which Mr. Beachcroft naturally possessed.

In his selection of Scripture subjects, Mr. Beachcroft may be said especially to have fixed on those which were pregnant with moral lessons and practical results; as if he were indefatigably anxious to make known the *path*, while he proclaimed the *hope*, of the believer. Therefore Mr. Beachcroft makes choice, not only of those commanding texts which more immediately relate to Him who died for sinners, but he also adopts the following:—" *Balaam and Balak* ;" Numbers xxii. 34; as admonishing us to regard the *Scripture* as our rule of conduct; and to shun the crying sins, both of avarice and cruelty to animals. Again, the history of *Enoch* (Gen. v. 24) becomes the subject of the discourse, that so the congregation might be taught "to walk with God;" and to recollect, that "God is present with them in every thing which they plan, contrive, undertake, execute;

that He knows the thoughts of the heart." Mr. Beachcroft makes the history of *Eutychus* (Acts xx. 9) the occasion of exhorting parents religiously to instruct their children, in order that they may be devout and attentive in the house of God. On the case of *Abraham* he expatiates, in another sermon, (Gen. xxii. 8,) as a pattern of entire submission to the will of God. On the request of "the disciples, in the road to Emmaus," he beautifully grounds an exhortation to family worship at the close of day. Without frequently descending into the detail of moral practice, Mr. Beachcroft was intent on expounding such texts as powerfully subserve it.

We naturally pass on to "the *character*" of Mr. Beachcroft's preaching.

First, its *simplicity*. This quality so far predominated, as to exclude, in some degree, that order, and connexion, and consecutiveness, which so materially aid our recollection of "the word preached." Not that the preacher was deficient in a clear conception of his subject. Every thought that arose in his mind, and was committed to his sheets, was as transparent as a crystal bead. Yet, like beads lying in a partially unstrung state, his ideas appear in an

attractive rather than a methodical form. Those sermons to which we have alluded, as illustrating his choice of subjects, and even his discourse on Enoch, are not free from the fault in question. Though in the latter sermon man is represented as "a sinful worm of the earth, a creature born in sin and shapen in iniquity," and as one who "must have a new nature given him," and even be "born again;" and though salvation is said to be "the free gift of God," still these essential points are stated in so *incidental* a way, that they would scarcely arrest the attention of one who is yet wholly unacquainted with them. They are not wrought into that *chain* of Christian doctrine, which ought, more or less, to appear in every discourse.

That the above deficiency originated in a certain *dread of system* the author is sufficiently aware. No man was more inimical than his late beloved friend to that systematic preciseness which requires one invariable mode of dividing Scripture subjects, and which would compel us to adopt every iota of opinion, and every syllable of phraseology, which itself approves or recommends; and thus literally makes a man an offender for a word. Such precise-



ness is alike opposed to charity and truth. For that word which maintains a wholesome uniformity of doctrine, (an uniformity in some *rare* instances, almost, if not wholly, imperceptible\* to the eye of man,) observes that latitude of expression which, to a superficial reader, may seem to involve a contradiction. The inspired penmen overlook the minutiae of system while contemplating the magnitude of truth. Nevertheless the minister before us, in shunning the faults of system, was in some measure unmindful of its excellencies, and observed that plan in handling and expounding texts, which is, perhaps, satisfactory to the preacher, but not at all times easily apprehended by the hearer. Or (if another comparison may be allowed) the spiritual food provided in Mr. Beachcroft's discourses, like the manna divinely appointed to fall around the camp of Israel, is in rich abundance rather than in exact order, and is sufficient to relieve the hungry though not to gratify the fastidious. Not even the deep and mysterious verity of *election* is excluded from his sermons; though it is treated with that mode-

\* We allude to such scripture passages as refer to the infinite mercy, and the tremendous justice of the Almighty.

ration and sobriety which may be pronounced truly scriptural. He boldly enunciated what God only can explain. For instance, (vol. i. p. 255,) "We know that the blood of Christ was not shed at an uncertainty, for his own words are, 'All that the Father giveth me shall come to me.'"

Before we present any further quotations from the discourses, preached to the Blunham congregation, we may advert to some other exceptions which have occasionally been taken by the reader; such as their want of depth, of point, and especially of experimental matter. The author, without venturing to affirm that there is no foundation for these charges, would, nevertheless, advocate the pulpit addresses of Mr. Beachcroft, on account of those undoubted excellencies to which we will presently recur. And whatever might be the prevalence of those defects which we have now noticed in his discourses, they may partly be referred to that "*simplicity*" of which we have already spoken; and partly (as it respects their want of depth and experimental character) to that liveliness of mind which somewhat incapacitated Mr. Beachcroft, in common with hundreds of his fellow-men, for the exercise of profound thought

and, we might add, of experimental preaching. Though far from a superficial expositor of the sacred text, still his mind was so active, his fancy so alive in the contemplation of it, and consequently his associations so many, and his illustrations so vivid, that he paused not to descend into its depth, nor even, generally speaking, to trace the secrets of corruption, the severities of conflict, and the alternations of hope and fear, of elevation and depression, in the Christian breast. These, confessedly, together with that absence of *point*, which after all is not very considerable, are among the faults of Mr. Beachcroft's preaching; though they are not a little balanced by those excellencies to which we will immediately invite the attention of the reader.

First, as to a *prevailing aim to exalt the adorable Redeemer*. This is sufficiently obvious in both the volumes of Mr. Beachcroft, especially in vol. ii. pp. 141 and 146, in which he first applies the striking language of St. Paul, "He has made Him (Christ) to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him;" and then offers the following very lucid comment on the wonders of redeeming grace:—"The Saviour,

then, came and put himself in the sinner's stead ; and, having done so, he had a strict right, nay it was his Father's will that He should put the sinner into his place ; that so the Father might accept him again, clothed with the best, the only spotless robe, the robe of righteousness. This is the scripture doctrine of justification by faith." In the same volume, (p. 237,) Mr. Beachcroft clearly recognizes the necessity of our being convinced of sin in order to our effectual reception of the only Saviour ; until it (the soul of man) is made sensible of its lost condition by nature, it does not seek for the supports which must come from grace alone. With the Laodiceans of old it says, looking only upon the present scene, " I am rich and increased with goods, and have need of nothing." Again, (p. 238,) " The bread which came down from heaven is found to be the only nourishment for the hungry soul." " Then our Lord will be precious to those who know Him." And, (p. 240,) how beautiful is the application of this truly Christian doctrine, " Are you feeding upon this hidden manna ? Do you go out and gather it by prayer, by meditation, by a constant attendance on the ordinances of religion ?"

Another prominent feature in the "Scriptural Discourses" of Mr. Beachcroft is *his anxiety to reach the heart by delineating that love of Christ which passeth knowledge*. The following extract (from Discourse on 2 Cor. 5—14, 15, entitled "The constraining efficacy of the love of Christ,") may be sufficient. "Love brought Him into this mortal state; love caused Him to be born of an obscure family in Bethlehem, to lie in a manger. It was love for us which caused Him to live in poverty, to be subject to want. Love brought him to the judgment-seat of Pilate; love made him willing to wear the crown of thorns, the purple robe, to give his back to the smiters, and his cheek to them that plucked off his hair. Love supported him in his agony in the garden; it nailed him to the cross; it rose with him from the grave." It was not with the thunders of the law, but with the seraphic melody of the gospel, as concentrated in the love of Christ, that Mr. Beachcroft attempted to overpower the hearts of all his hearers. Can it then be a matter of surprise that the following appears among his private memoranda? "If I had a *favourite* theme in all these little labours, I do believe it was *the love of Christ*:

in all its branches which I could see, and in myriads which I could not see, it passeth knowledge."\*

To *the gracious operation of the Spirit on the soul of man*, Mr. Beachcroft (vol. i. p. 63) thus simply but definitely refers. "He, therefore, can soften the hard heart; he can bend the stubborn will; he can give to the once proud Pharisee the spirit of a little child." In like manner (vol. ii. p. 7) he insists, "there must be a work of grace to lead us to God." To the same effect, and not *unexperimentally*, (if we may use the word,) he says, "Here . . . . is a source of unspeakable comfort to the believing Christian. He says to himself, 'God has enabled me to

\* Strikingly coincident with the above is the testimony of "the United Brethren." When labouring as ambassadors of Christ, amid the frost and snows of Greenland, what but their unwearied declaration of "the love of Christ" attracted the attention, and at length melted the hearts of its rugged inhabitants? When the Holy Spirit enabled them to see and feel that love, no other security was wanting for the performance of each Christian duty.

" . . . . . O thou bleeding Lamb,  
The true morality is love of thee."

YOUNG.

choose this good part: I see the value of my soul; and I resolve to make any sacrifice which Christ, my Saviour, calls for at my hands, so that I may but live for ever with Him in heaven. But I sometimes feel so weak in myself, that I am afraid of falling away.' But let me say to such humble characters, 'fear not.' It is true, you cannot keep yourselves; but God, who is faithful to his covenant and promise, says, 'He will keep the feet of his saints.' They may stumble if the path be rugged, but they shall not finally fall away. They are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation."

In the same spirit of truly pastoral anxiety, and under the same mighty impulse of redeeming love, Mr. Beachcroft presses the necessity of *imbodying Christian principles in Christian practice*. In vol. i. p. 237, he observes, "Faith must be operative; it must 'work by love.' The daily conversation, the life, the habitual practice, the obedience of the Christian, all find their respective places in the grand scheme devised by infinite wisdom for the salvation of man." In the foregoing passage is involved this seeming paradox; namely, that when we utterly despair of salvation by our own works,

and cast all our hopes exclusively on a dying Saviour, we obey him on the right, the efficacious principle of love ; for the deeper our sense of the ruin brought on us by sin, the more we hate it ; and the stronger our conviction of the restoring grace of Christ, the more we love him and obey him.

Not less illustrative of the practical tendency of his discourses is the following address to parents, (vol. ii. p. 320 :) “ Teach them (your children) to worship the God of their fathers in spirit and in truth ; to look upon his word as the best book ; upon his providence as the best defence ; upon his Spirit as the best guide ; upon his promises as the best reward ; upon his Son, who has purchased all these blessings with the price of his own blood, as the best and only Saviour. Go on in the practice of every religious duty.”

Having shewn by the foregoing references, both to the subject and character of Mr. Beachcroft's preaching, that it was, on the whole, truly Christian in its principles and conclusions, the author is unwilling to weary the attention of the reader by prolonging the present chapter.

Yet, as certain particulars relating to its main topic have not hitherto been presented to his



view, and such too as could not be suppressed without doing an injustice to the memory of Mr. Beachcroft, and as some of his *later* MS. sermons have just fallen into the hands of his biographer, it may be allowed him to enter on these several points, as also to introduce some of his very valuable letters in the succeeding chapter.

## CHAPTER VII.

*Subject and Character of Mr. Beachcroft's  
Preaching.—Certain Letters of Mr Beach-  
croft.*

WHILE the discourses of Mr. Beachcroft exhibited, as we have just remarked, a simplicity which, on the whole, forms one of their leading recommendations, an anxiety to exalt the Saviour, and a deep impression of his love, they were scarcely less remarkable for bright and attractive views of the character of vital Christianity. He evidently preached as one who had himself been divinely taught to rejoice in God his Saviour, and who desired that his flock should be made partakers of his joy. Here we may equally appeal to his sermons and his corres-

pondence. In reverting to the former, we discover (and in those too of a later date, which were never committed to the press) the following delightful effusions of a Christian spirit. The text, Matt. xiii. 45, 46. "An object presents itself to the merchantman, yet more desirable. Something unknown before, or but casually attended to; something, the merchandize of which is better than the merchandize of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold. The merchant pauses, he compares the excellence of his former merchandize, he finds (as Dr. South somewhere expresses it) 'religion to be such a portable pleasure, that he puts all his wealth into this one jewel, and carries it with him.' It is his companion, his solace, his wealth, his treasure."

Again: "He sells all that he has and buys it. By this strong figure does our blessed Saviour point out the willingness of the really converted soul to make any sacrifices which the word of God requires for its salvation. But" (here Mr. Beachcroft offers an important caution) "so fatally is error too often intermixed with truth, that men have understood literally those passages of sacred Scripture which should be taken figuratively; have imposed heavy bur-

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dens where the easy yoke of Christ should have been carried ; have, for instance, made penance, and wandering poverty, and self-sacrifice, their Saviours ; forgetting that . . . . we are to take up our cross daily, and follow Christ, but that *he* is to make the cross, and *we* are to bear it ; and that other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." Mr. Beachcroft pointedly adds, with reference to the present day, " we shall not find men, even of professed religious principle, sacrificing too much for their Saviour . . . . And even with the most cautious, who really wish to take up their cross and follow Christ, how often do we find, when about to purchase the ' pearl of great price,' that in the sale of the other goodly pearls, some favourite jewel is reserved ; some besetting sin is cherished ; some idol which usurps the place of the one living and true God ?" Ananias and Sapphira are referred to by way of illustration, since " they wanted to be generous in the midst of concealed covetousness. The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked."

Of the primitive followers of Christ, Mr. Beachcroft next says, in a similar strain of encouragement to his true disciples ; " They

saw, they trusted, they waited, they endured, until at last, the beloved John in Patmos, for the testimony of Jesus, beheld the whole line of prophecy unfolded—the judgment seat, the books opened, the net drawn to land, the final separation made; and the heavenly messenger not stopping even here, opens to his view the eternal blessedness of the righteous in the kingdom of God. ‘I saw a new heaven and a new earth.’ (Rev. xxii. 1.) ”

Mr. Beachcroft sums up all by thus directly applying the words on which he had expatiated. “He (Christ) is the pearl of great price; He is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth; He, as a peacemaker with your heavenly Father, can bring peace to your consciences; He can fulfil the desire of them that seek him; He can make your cup of blessings overflow, and, like the Israelites, when you are much discouraged because of the way, and fainting in the wilderness, He can bring living waters out of the rock of stone.” And, in conclusion, Mr. Beachcroft remarks, “the servants of God, in all ages of the world, have their sacrifices to make of present gratification for future good. But the gifts of God even in this world are so great, his grace so

refreshing, his Spirit so comforting, and the earnestness of final happiness so abundant, that experience almost teaches them to say, that they *do enjoy heaven* even whilst they are passing along the journey of life."

In discoursing to his own flock on John xv. 5, "I am the vine, &c.;" Mr. Beachcroft again breathes a spirit of cheerful confidence in Jesus Christ. "As a child runs to a tender parent with every little want, and every momentary sorrow, so should the Christian be continually approaching God, through Christ." Again; "Empty of all goodness, weak and sinful in ourselves, unprofitable and barren branches; Jesus Christ by uniting us to himself by faith, fills us with good things, and makes the branch which, for its own intrinsic worth, would be nigh unto burning, fruitful in every good word and work." In another page Christian progress is thus illustrated for the consolation of the poor in spirit: "When the blossom gives place to the tender fruit, and that fruit begins to grow, the person who watches it every day cannot perceive its increase. And yet look at it after a longer period, and that increase is easily perceived. So exactly with the Christian. He receives the heavenly principle which is at first



And that with the principle



but a *desire* to serve God. He finds this principle extend itself, and show itself in the Christian life; it breaks forth on the right hand and on the left; it watches every opening and opportunity to do good, it seems to be moving forward even amidst a thousand hindrances and impediments, realizing, as it were, our Lord's own words, 'herein is my Father glorified that ye bear much fruit.'"

The foregoing extracts being necessarily longer than we had intended, we must not venture upon others. Enough may have been exhibited to prove that, while the discourses of Mr. Beachcroft do not conceal the *cross*, they especially hold forth the *crown* of the devoted Christian. Of his sermons it may generally be said that, while flowing and elegant in style, they are rich in the captivating influence of Christian truth, and calculated to fan the flame of Christian love.

We will no longer detain the reader from the correspondence of Mr. Beachcroft, relative to his pulpit labours. He thus writes from Brighton, (where he seemed peculiarly to engage both the attention and affection of his hearers,) to his venerable mother.

“ MY DEAR MOTHER,

“ With the deepest humility of mind, we may rejoice that we are made the honoured instruments of good, either to the bodies or souls of our fellow creatures. I know from experience that no gratification is equal to that which arises from endeavouring to serve a good and gracious master. I believe my preaching is made the means of instructing many in this place. I had some critical hearers on Sunday. Dr. — and Dr. —, with a large body of clergymen, but I am thankful never even to wish to soften my method ; but to win the people, if I can, by love.”

To his mother he again writes from the same place upon the same subject. “ I always rejoice in your prayers, which I believe have been heard and answered . . . . I esteem it the highest privilege to pray for you, and all who are near and dear to me ; and I verily believe our mutual prayers are granted, or I never should be blessed as I am in awakening and comforting souls in this place. My sermon on Sunday was well received ; several persons of fashion said, ‘ It is very awakening ; he was rather long, but I could have listened ten minutes longer’ . . . . I believe I am not at all esteemed by two sorts of persons : the one call

me a saint and a methodist ; and the other think I do not go half far enough in my doctrine. But thus it always was and always will be. Let us rejoice and go forward.

“ Ever most affectionately yours,

“ R. P. BEACHCROFT.”

We extract from the same correspondence, a passage immediately relating to the *private* ministrations of Mr. Beachcroft at Brighton. “ A physician came to me yesterday, and begged me to visit a dying gentleman, from the Stock Exchange, who had been religiously brought up, but had given himself to the acquisition of this world’s goods, and had forgotten his God. I went, and never witnessed a more affecting scene. . . He would not permit me to ask a common question, but began to open his whole mind. The soul was every thing : money mere dirt and dross. I really never saw this world and the next in such strong colours ; begging me to be his almoner whilst I stay here. Only pray that I may be humbled in all these labours.”

When writing from Blunham to his beloved mother, he thus disclaims all personal merit as a minister of Jesus Christ.

“ MY DEAR MOTHER,

“ It is a satisfaction, and let me say no trifling one, to think that the labours of the morning and evening are directed to the great ends of men’s salvation ; and that whether I live to bring it into use, or die before I accomplish half I aim at, still I am performing an acceptable service, though not in the least jot or tittle a meritorious one. I thank God that the cause nearest my heart prospers, under His guidance, in this place.

“ Ever most affectionately yours,

“ R. P. BEACHCROFT.”

To a friend Mr. Beachcroft writes, April 26, 1813, and that in direct acknowledgment of the dependence of ministerial success on the influences of the Holy Spirit : “ All this, the dispossession and the possession, (alluding to a religious change of heart,) are the gradual work of the Holy Spirit of God. These principles spring up and bear fruit, we know not how. Just as the wind bloweth and we hear the sound thereof, but know not whence it cometh and whither it goeth. So is every one that is born of the Spirit.”

To the same friend Mr. Beachcroft writes

June 30, 1818, in the true spirit of self-scrutiny and with a very general allusion to certain controversial topics of the day :

“ My whole life seems to be employed in teaching ; and I do assure you, that I sometimes ask the question with a due portion of apprehension, Thou that teachest another, teachest thou not thyself? ” . . . “ I am reading Martin Luther and Calvin with great attention, and find them to be wise fellows. Nine tenths of the men who talk about Lutherans and Calvinists know no more of their peculiar tenets, or rather of the points in which they are united, than we know, even after reading Dr. Chalmers, of what is passing in the planet Jupiter.

“ Very affectionately yours,

“ R. P. BEACHCROFT.”

To a quondam fellow-labourer, Mr. Beachcroft in like manner develops the pastoral feelings of his breast. The date Blunham, July 12, 1819, and Jan. 20, 1823.

“ MY DEAR SIR,

“ If it should please God to spare my life for a few years, I know not of any thing which will give me more heartfelt pleasure than to find that my

old friends and assistants are made the instruments, in the hands of God, to bring poor, perishing sinners to a knowledge of salvation by Jesus Christ. As we grow older, we cannot do so much in some branches of our profession as we used to do. But our little may be so mellowed and matured by grace, blessing a sound judgment, that a word or two after the meridian of life is past may have the effect of a sermon preached in younger days. And O what an encouragement is the thought that He will never cast off the work of his own hands. . . . . I have ever considered the great temptation of a young minister to be his activity ; up and be doing. This was once my own case. A sort of restlessness because things did not go fast enough. But I now see in others what I dare to say I shall soon find in myself, a more sluggish step as I advance in years. All these varieties prove our infirmity, and lead to more implicit faith in him with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.

“ You describe, (said he,) your own spiritual anxieties in a way which I can easily comprehend. It is a great work that we have to do ; and I can only find comfort, peace and safety, whether I should live one day or fifty years longer, by looking unto Jesus, the author and

the finisher of my faith. We are for ever busy in thinking, or perhaps too much in a sort of religious speculative way of fancying, what may happen before we quit this short life. But I always try to cheek this spirit, because it takes me off from my simple dependence upon the Rock of ages. We need the strong hold, and the sure refuge, and the foundation-stone, and the ever-flowing fountain. These and such like strong figures, always employed in mercy by an all-wise God, are our greatest comfort.

“ Very affectionately yours,  
“ R. P. BEACHCROFT.”

In the year 1820, when corresponding with the same friend, Mr. Beachcroft thus feelingly adverts to the circumstances of his own parish : “ We have some fruit, but when I think of the incessant pains bestowed upon the village, and the little gratitude we experience, my heart sometimes misgives me. But I would imitate David, and encourage myself in the Lord my God.”

Nevertheless Mr. Beachcroft could testify, (if here we may again glance at the language of his printed sermons \*) “ we have many liv-

\* Vol ii. p. 191.

ing evidences, that the power of the gospel is the same now as it was formerly ; we have those among us who have found the efficacy of religion, as it is revealed in holy Scripture, and who, from being disobedient and unthankful, and to every good work reprobate, are become teachable, serious, heavenly-minded, humble, followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises."

That Mr. Beachcroft did not overlook the popular charge of *enthusiasm* against those who are stedfastly purposed to preach and magnify the Saviour, and that he knew how to repel it, may appear by the following familiar letter to the author.

" Blunham, June 24, 1809.

" MY DEAR METHUEN,

" It must be an *enthusiast* who disliked the tendency of your sermon ; for the world should never forget that there are more enthusiasts against religion, who carry their prejudices further than any of its friends do their supposed superstitions and bigotries in its favour. The next time you preach, show the congregation that *they* are the most dangerous fanatics who worship the golden calf of pleasure ; not only



in *Sunday* evening concerts, but in weekly meetings held every night; nay, that they go from place of worship to place of worship. Ask them what they would say of us poor religionists, if we opened lectures every evening; if we met, for instance, at St. George's church to sing praises to *our God* for a single hour. The very shadow of a psalm-singer is enough to terrify a person into fits, who would sit hours to hear a dressed-up puppet squall a language totally unintelligible to half the company. They make valuable sacrifices to *their* God; they call his votaries divine, heavenly; they worship him with flute, sackbut, dulcimer, and all kinds of music; and yet if we show the least spark of the fire of devotion in our religious observances, we are to be thrown, without mercy, into the fiery furnace of laughter, criticism, methodism, separation, and I know not what. There is this comfort, however; that the God whom we serve is able to deliver us out of the midst of the fiery furnace; yea, and he will deliver us. . . . If I hear . . . a bad construction put upon any project I have formed for the welfare of my people, "none of these things move me." I had counted the cost before I undertook the work; and though I desire the

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good opinion of every body, whose good opinion is worth having, yet if I meet with a laugh, or a sneer, I still go on my way rejoicing.

“ Yours affectionately,

“ R. P. BEACHCROFT.”

In exact accordance with the spirit of the foregoing letter was an observation once made by Mr. Beachcroft, upon the same subject, to the author; namely, “ I would never *seek* the name of ‘ methodist,’ but I would never *shun* it.”

How foreign to Mr. Beachcroft’s mind was all anger and uncharitableness, even when he spoke of the calumniators of true religion, may be inferred from the subjoined extract from a paper, “ On *affectionate* Preaching,” which he himself wrote, and inserted in “ The Christian Observer ” for June 1821.

“ I do not say that all equally pious ministers can equally gain upon the affections of their people; but every Christian pastor who believes that Christ has loved him should prove that he tenderly loves his flock. It is the criterion by which it is to be known that we have passed from death unto life, that ‘ we love the brethren.’ Every faithful minister of the gospel has probably known

some instances in which *the simple statement of the love of Christ* has been productive of the greatest good ; and he has found the Lord to be ‘not in the wind, not in the fire, but in the still small voice.’ God is love. In preaching, then, and in practice, ‘let us love one another ; for love is of God, and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God.’—R. P. B.

His hearers would readily attest that Mr. Beachcroft uniformly preached in the spirit which he here advocates ; or that he “spoke the truth in *love*.” He had inhaled its essence at the cross till at length it manifestly became his vital breath. Pride, austerity, anger, never cast a shade over his pulpit ministrations. As he was “constrained by the love of Christ,” so he “longed after” the people in the bowels of that only Saviour. And if ever the image of Him who wept over the guilty Zion was reflected by a mortal minister, it unquestionably was so by the subject of the present memoir. Nor had he failed practically to learn from his great exemplar, that “the spirit of love” is, in the strictest sense, consistent with “a sound mind.” Far indeed from Mr. Beachcroft was that *false* charity which conceals the sins and danger of our fellow-creatures, and which will

be condemned by its deluded victims on the great day. His was that *true* charity, which would rather sacrifice the ease than the welfare of mankind; and would sooner offend them in this world than see them perish in the next. He copied the benevolence of One who condemned the hypocrisy of the Pharisees, and foretold the ruin of Jerusalem.

Of the countenance, and voice, and manner of Mr. Beachcroft, considered as a Christian preacher, we must very generally speak. His countenance was one of singular kindness and animation; his voice was sufficient in its compass, distinct in articulation, pleasing and varied in its tones; his manner was gentle, graceful, impressive in a high degree; and whether "preaching Christ" to his rustic parishioners at Blunham, or to his more polished auditory at Brighton, he was enabled equally to excite and fix attention. Nor was that effect less remarkable when Mr. Beachcroft was summoned by his diocesan to address his clerical brethren. His sermon on that occasion was published at their general request: and well did he remind them, in that discourse, that "in all other professions, as a good man comes nearer and nearer to the grave, he tries to loosen himself from his

daily habits and pursuits, that he may attend yet more closely to the concerns of eternity. . . . But the minister of religion may be wedded to his pursuits; not to the letter, but to the spirit; not to forms and ceremonies, however excellent they may be; but to that pure principle of salvation by faith in Jesus Christ, which, perhaps, will be more and more unfolded, through all the ages of eternity.”

Had *human* commendation been his object, Mr. Beachcroft might have been satisfied, to no small extent, on being informed (for such was the fact) that his discourses, at the express desire of (Dr. Burgess) the Bishop of St. David's,\* were translated into Welch; and that they were reprinted in America. A pious minister thus expressed himself respecting them: —“Wishing to raise the tone of a clergyman's mind, and to elevate his views beyond a mere system of ethics, I recommended to him ‘*Beachcroft's Sermons*.’ . . . He delivered the sermons successively. His congregation increased in number, and a spirit of seriousness and inquiry became perceptible among the people.” The same correspondent states, “I also presented a

\* Now of Salisbury; whom the author gladly recognizes as his learned and revered diocesan.

young clergyman with a copy of '*Beachcroft's Sermons*;' and he informed me that his church soon became crowded, that the dissenters were his frequent auditors, and that he could truly say these discourses had proved a blessing both to himself and his people."

Does the reader ask whether Mr. Beachcroft delivered extemporaneous, or written, sermons? He in fact confined himself to neither; but at one time he delivered a discourse fully and carefully written; at another, he had ample notes before him; and occasionally he addressed his congregation from the Bible only, having considered and digested his subject. Yet, as he advanced in his familiarity with holy Scripture, and acquired a greater facility and fluency of speech, he pretty generally made use of notes only. Experience had taught him that each of the foregoing modes of preaching has its peculiar advantages; and that, as accuracy results from composition, so fluency of style is the effect of extemporaneous addresses. Accordingly an aged minister is said to have delivered this advice to his younger brethren at Cambridge:—"First carefully compose five hundred sermons, and then preach from notes only." Both methods have been attended with

the divine blessing though after all the latter, when wisely and spiritually adopted, is usually found to be by far the more impressive.

A passing observation may be made on Mr. Beachcroft's four sermons on the Lord's Supper, published in 1820, and on his Sunday evening lecture. The former may fairly be classed among the many proofs of his fidelity as "a minister of grace," and of his sound and spiritual acquaintance with revealed truth. The lecture (delivered in the chancel) consisted either of a plain exposition of some part of holy Scripture, or of a selection from the book of homilies, accompanied with such observations of his own, as might serve to elucidate and impress the import of those golden compositions. On such occasions he remarked, "Whatever be the subject, I always find I can adapt to it some *collect* or other of the church." As the lecture was immediately designed to find some spiritual employment for his people on the Sabbath evening, and to prevent that idleness and loitering and gossiping, which then too commonly prevailed, so it was well attended, more particularly by the lower orders, and, it seems, was instrumental in leading them to those "pastures" which sustain the spirit.

On the whole it may be affirmed that Mr. Beachcroft, when his views of Christianity were matured, never so enforced the law as to invade the freedom of the Gospel, nor so expounded the Gospel as to weaken the obligations of the law, considered as a rule of life. Generally speaking, every doctrine, every duty, every threatening, every promise, that is contained in holy Scripture, had its proper time, and place, and weight, in his discourses. He gave counsel to whom counsel was due, exhortation to whom exhortation, reproof to whom reproof, and comfort to whom comfort. Where he wanted the force of pointed, or the depth of experimental preaching, he so beautifully clothed his thoughts in scripture language, and so evidently glowed with the subject of redeeming love, that none were "sent empty away."

To the *ultras*\* only he proved offensive as a preacher. He was far too doctrinal for the Pharisee, and far too practical for the Antinomian.

\* Never have the extravagances of ultraism in religious matters been more graphically stated, or more felicitously exposed, than in the introduction to Mr. Jay's "Lectures on the Christian Character;" the component parts of which are arranged with a master's hand, while the entire work is clearly and powerfully animated by a Christian spirit.



The Supra-lapsarian might complain of his overlooking the decrees of God ; and the Arminian might start with horror whenever in the very words of Scripture, he made any allusion to the subject. His cheerful deportment might strike the mere ascetic as conformity to " the course of this world," while his seriousness might pass for austerity with those who love its vanities. Yet, when preachers and hearers shall be summoned to the great tribunal, few will be found to have surpassed him in obeying the injunction of his Lord, " Feed my sheep, feed my lambs."

## CHAPTER VIII.

*His zeal and fidelity as a Parish Priest.*

WHAT a modern author\* has remarked in his invaluable and (it might be said) immortal treatise on "the Christian Ministry," was strongly realized at Blunham. "They (the people) must know us in order to love us; and for this purpose the pastor must live among them as their friend; gradually to slide into their affections, and draw out their whole souls." Here the offices of the pastor and the missionary meet; for it is related by the biographer of Elliott, that "he was indeed the father of his people. By holding frequent intercourse with them, he greatly endeared himself to them, and

\* Rev. Charles Bridges, vicar of Old Newton, Suffolk.

became acquainted with the extent of their knowledge of divine things ; with their trials and difficulties, with their joys and sorrows. He was in this manner enabled to act as their instructor, counsellor, and comforter."

In a similar spirit, and unquestionably for like purposes, did Mr. Beachcroft fulfil the vow which he had made at the time of ordination ; even to " use both public and *private* monition and exhortations, as well to the *sick* as to the *whole* within his cure, as need shall require, and occasion shall be given." In his view it was a mere contradiction to pretend to fidelity in the church, if that fidelity were not apparent (to the utmost extent of his opportunities) in the house of every parishioner. When, therefore, the Sabbath was past, he did not consider his pastoral obligations to be suspended till the Sunday following. He counted not his time his own. In private, as in public ministrations, he regarded duty and happiness as inseparably linked together, and never did the cheerfulness of his aspect more unequivocally prove the abiding gladness of his heart than when he was returning from the abode of his poor and pious neighbours.

Mr. Beachcroft was a " parish priest" in

the strictest sense of the expression. He felt how impossible it is to neglect the great duty of testifying from house to house "repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ,"\* and yet finally to "account with joy, and not with grief." Therefore he habitually asked, "How may I employ my time to the largest benefit of my parishioners?" Rarely did a day pass in which he did not hold some private communication with his people. With him it was an easy matter to quit his study (much as he loved it) for the cottage, and for a while to sacrifice the society of some valued or beloved guest for that of the poor, the ignorant, the vicious, the miserable of his flock. No heart could be more buoyant than his own with Christian happiness whenever the grace of his Redeemer prospered his devoted efforts to awaken them and lead them to the cross. Their peace and consolation were his own.

Mr. Beachcroft could say, even to the meanest of his flock, "Ye are dear to me;" for he remembered that for *them* also a Saviour bled and died. When, therefore, he had addressed them on the Sabbath as "dearly beloved bre-

\* Acts xx. 21.

thren," he proved the sincerity of that address by visiting them at their respective homes as their benefactor, their counsellor, their comforter. To the abode of the afflicted and the dying, he first directed his steps. Whenever they resided at a distance from his own house, he seized that opportunity of visiting their healthy neighbours, and thus economized his time.

More than once was it the privilege of the author to accompany Mr. Beachcroft on such interesting, such edifying occasions. Never can he forget the endearing familiarity of his manner, the depth of his sympathetic feelings, the beautiful simplicity of his remarks on the Author and the end of tribulations, and on the sorrows and sufferings of Him who is not less our pattern than our refuge in the time of trouble. Then also in "the spirit of supplication," he besought "the Father of mercies" to sanctify and to succour the afflicted.

Of late years Mr. Beachcroft established a weekly cottage lecture, which was held alternately in each hamlet of his parish. That lecture consisted of an exposition of some appropriate part of Scripture, and was accompanied with a suitable prayer. Though principally designed as a spiritual help to his parishioners,

and more particularly to the sick and aged, he availed himself of the opportunity it afforded him of ascertaining the temporal condition of his poorer brethren. While supremely anxious for the welfare of their immortal souls, he never overlooked the comfort of their mortal bodies.

Mr. Beachcroft thus refers to the above lecture in a familiar letter to Mr. — :

“ Blunham, Nov. 6, 1826.

“ MY DEAR SIR,

“ Every other Thursday we hold the meeting at Moggerhanger, or Charlton. This makes the Blunham people more alive, and pleases the distant poor exceedingly. We have four or five cripples at Moggerhanger, who can never get to a place of worship. This service is admirably attended. We say from time to time at whose house the following meeting shall be held, and the poor take a pleasure in getting their chairs borrowed, and the room ready, and the Bible on the table. This idea originated with Mr. —, and came, I trust, from a higher source of teaching.

“ Yours, affectionately,

“ R. P. BEACHCROFT.”

Mr. Beachcroft too highly estimated the value

of the soul of man if postpone his visit to the  
 and all it was actually requested to attend  
 them. With him the plea was inadmissible  
 that whatever the minister is uninvited his at-  
 tendance may prove offensive and perhaps  
 injurious to the sufferer. Mr. Beachcroft re-  
 sponded to the request made given to the Israel-  
 ites themselves. "Neither have they sought  
 to hinder me," and that he himself might  
 be "hindered and injured" of that great of-  
 fence. He is now heard of a case of sickness  
 in the family. That he hastened to the spot, and  
 endeavored to discharge his conscience by  
 making his attendance appear to that of his  
 religious neighbors. Thus the letter would be  
 made to witness against him at the last, "You  
 cannot be in my family without one at-  
 tention to all the what I must do to be saved."  
 Father will be Judge of all rectify to the fide-  
 lity of his servants by addressing him in these  
 religious words - "I was sick and thou visit-  
 est me."

Other letters of Mr. Beachcroft, relative to  
 the appointment of a parish priest, cannot  
 be so interest the religious reader. We will

REV. ROBERT PIERCE BLACKBURN.

therefore proceed to copy and to refer to it.

To one friend he writes —

“ BIRMINGHAM, JAN. 1841.”

“ MY DEAR —

“ You have already found the new year & its entrée to be happy. I hope so, and my hearty wishes shall be with you as it takes its leave. I can say the same of my employment, which I must leave upon me with fresh courage every day, notwithstanding the times that will I have to encounter, ..... on my way to the winter and the sweeping floods which will sweep the year yet I still think the wife of a minister of religion, in a place where he will be the very happiest in this wide world.

— I have now signed

— J. P. Blackburn

To another friend.

“ BIRMINGHAM, JAN. 1841.”

“ Although our connection is far from pleasant in the vineyard of Christ, we are very long standing, and I trust a connection not merely by the ties of sympathy, but



of the soul of man to postpone his visit to the sick till he was actually requested to attend them. With him the plea was inadmissible that whenever the minister is uninvited his attendance may prove obtrusive, and perhaps unwelcome to the sufferer. Mr. Beachcroft remembered the reproof once given to the Israelitish shepherds: "Neither have they *sought* that which was lost;"\* and, that he himself might be "undefiled and innocent of that great offence," he no sooner heard of a case of sickness in his village, than he hastened to the spot, and endeavoured to discharge his conscience by faithful, yet affectionate appeals to that of his afflicted neighbour. Thus the latter would be unable to witness against him at the last, "You suffered me to go into eternity without one attempt to tell me what I must do to be saved." Rather will the Judge of all testify to the fidelity of his servant, by addressing him in these memorable words, "I was sick, and thou visitedst me."†

Other letters of Mr. Beachcroft, relative to the important office of a parish priest, cannot fail to interest the religious reader. We will

\* Ezekiel xxxiv. 4.

† Matt. xxv. 40.

therefore proceed to copy such as more immediately refer to it.

To one friend he writes:—

“ Blunham, Jan. 2, 1817.

“ MY DEAR —,

“ You have already found the new year at its entrée to be happy, I make no doubt ; and my hearty wishes shall be with you, till it . . . . takes its leave. I can say the same for myself. My employments, which I always loved, win upon me with fresh charms every day ; and notwithstanding the thick mud which I now encounter, . . . . on my way to the workhouse, and some sweeping floods which touch the garden fence, yet I still think the work of a minister of religion, in a place where he can know his people, the very happiest on this side heaven.

“ Yours most sincerely,

“ R. P. BEACHCROFT.”

To another friend :

“ Hastings, July 22, 1817.

“ Although our connexion, as fellow-labourers in the vineyard of Christ, has not been of very long standing, yet I trust it is cemented not merely by the ties of reciprocal duty, but

by the strongest bonds of Christian affection. If the early disciples were to be known by the exercise of this principle, I am confident that the more we grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, the more we shall abound in this grace also. Every labour is sweetened, every anxious care is lessened, all the energies of the soul are called cheerfully into action, when affection for a fellow-traveller to the same heavenly city prompts us to walk with him, and converse with him, united by a common faith in the same Saviour.

“ When I left you on Monday night, just stepping into a round of duties, which have been my chief delight for the long period of eleven years, I could not but hope and pray that the same all-sufficient and most gracious God would bless and prosper your way. With many an anxious thought have I entered the cottages of our poor, and with many an ejaculation of gratitude have I hastened home again, when I have witnessed in some an increasing faith, in others more knowledge, and on the bed of sickness a patient waiting for a blessed immortality. Mr. Hall,\* of Leicester, painted

\* Afterwards resident at Bristol, where, as a Christian minister, he consecrated the powers and attainments of

to the very life ‘the supports and discouragements of the Christian minister,’ in a beautiful pamphlet, which I dare to say you have read. I think, upon mature reflection, that it is the happiest whilst it is the most anxious mode of life. The calling is of the highest order, and as the benefit is great, so is the danger great, if we discharge the same unworthily. But I have no question that, when you have engaged as much in the various works of the ministry as I have, you will find its charms so great, that you will be comparatively uneasy without your employment. It strikes me as peculiarly blessed when this is the case. . . . If the force of habit be strong, here we may wish it to have its full sway, whilst the good Spirit of God is daily quickening us to increase in *faith*, when our *exertions* may, and indeed must necessarily, be on the decline.

“Yours very sincerely,

“R. P. BEACHCROFT.”

On prying into the secret things of God, Mr. his great mind to the glory of his Lord and Saviour, and where, after a meek endurance of prolonged bodily tortures, he happily fell asleep in Jesus.

Beachcroft thus unbosoms himself to the same correspondent :—

“ Blunham, May 21, 1821.

“ MY DEAR FRIEND,

“ Happy I conceive is that man who listens to the voice of the Almighty, cautioning him *not to pry into secret things*, and applies those words of Job to his own presumptuous heart : ‘ Hitherto shalt thou come and no further.’ Life is too short for me to waste my time on matters upon which I could not precisely speak, were I to consider them to the exclusion of profitable subjects. Many a time have I laid aside the most valuable book, asking myself if at the end of the next hour, should I live to complete it, I should do the most good, and look back upon the hour with the most real pleasure, if passed in administering to the temporal and spiritual wants of one or two poor persons, or in benefiting my own mind ; and I generally find that *theory* gives way to *practice*, and meditation upon what I ought to do to the actual doing of the thing. . . . Besides, I can meditate the most profitably whilst I am practically engaged. It is said of one of old, (I give the *sub-*

*stance* of the passage,\*) that ‘being in the way, God met him.’ And the man who humbly lays himself out for usefulness, will find the truth of many such passages of Scripture experimentally fulfilled. . . . I leave the matter, not to wiser heads, but with that God who has done and will do all things well, and who has revealed just so much as it is good for his inquiring servants to know. . . . We have had a sad awful visitation in the village, which has occupied much of my time and thoughts. C. R., by whom — had three children, was nearly burned to death on Friday se’ennight, by heating a little turpentine on her fire. The scene is most fearfully impressive. We endeavour to improve it to the good of a tribe of spectators and nurses. She is quite sensible of her state before God, and I only pray the Spirit to write deeply on the heart of this wandering sheep the real nature of sin, and the fulness of the Saviour.

“ Ever yours,

“ R. P. BEACHCROFT.”

To the same friend he writes to the same effect.

\* Gen. xxiv. 27.

“Blunham, Oct. 12, 1821.

“MY DEAR FRIEND,

“A quick succession of relative duties so completely fills up my time, that I am obliged to consider every day, and almost every hour, as given up to the service of others. I believe it is very good for us to be taken out of self, and to be made useful, in some little degree, to the comfort of those about us. Parish matters claim a much higher stand in the scale of duties. Visiting, and I hope I may add praying, are among the sweetest and highest privileges; and then family wants, and every finger-ache of the neighbouring poor, call for sympathy and, if possible, relief. A poor woman came from a great distance for some assistance . . . . . quickened my willingness to attend to the sufferer by this consideration, ‘If it be a glorious attribute in God to have a mercy-seat for his children at all times to approach, what an honour is put upon us by the most faint resemblance!’ The penitent and miserable sinner goes to God through Christ, because he is sure that his prayer will be heard and answered. Why, (if it may be said without presumption,) do the wretched come to us . . . . but because

they are persuaded we shall afford them some relief?

“ Most affectionately yours,

“ R. P. BEACHCROFT.”

To another friend he writes from

“ Blunham, Oct. 23, 1821.

“ MY DEAR —,

“ The constant professional employment which I meet with at home and abroad, contributes, I am sure, to good spirits, if not exactly to good health ; and I am always the happiest when I have the most to do.

“ Ever yours affectionately,

“ R. P. BEACHCROFT.”

We will next make a short extract from an article written by Mr. Beachcroft on *pastoral inactivity*, and inserted in the “Christian Observer” for January 1825. It was entitled “Ecclesiastical Dry Rot.”—“*Pigerrimus* is not a very early riser. His breakfast and the newspaper occupy the prime of the day. He strolls round his garden, and may perhaps prune a wall-tree, or cut the dead wood out of the holly-hedge. He walks to the next market-



town; accepts an invitation to a small family dinner; goes home to prepare for his friend's hospitable board . . . . talks over the dangers which threaten the established church, from popish machinations and active sectaries; takes a hand at whist, walks home again at moonlight, and the day is gone. Now the question is whether our friend ought not to exclaim, '*diem perdidit!*'" And notwithstanding Mr Beachcroft says,—“If I know myself I am not among those who run down the clergy *as a body*, for I believe with Bishop Porteus, that in proportion to their numbers, nowhere shall we meet with so few instances of glaring misconduct,” he still pointedly remarks, “What, then, where gross vice is out of the question, may be said to generate this spiritual decay? Sloth, indolence, and formality; these compose a sort of spiritual dry-rot. It is not any notorious sins which shock the public eye, . . . but an enemy which we may call a sapper and miner. The whole day is wasted in doing nothing. The indolent shepherd gives no warning to his flock. The idle watchman slumbers at his post. These are the real enemies—these sap the foundation of the church.”—R. P. B.

Another article, of a like character and import, was inserted in the "Christian Observer" for March, 1815, with the signature of R. P. B. The subject was "Clerical Residence;" of which it is insisted by the author that it "is certainly the great turning point of clerical usefulness. Without residing upon his cure, the best man living cannot do his duty. The question, once asked by the brethren of David, may be fairly put to the conscience of every non-resident clergyman, 'With whom hast thou left those few sheep in the wilderness?' It cannot be denied, that the most solemn oaths have been taken, and the most sacred promises made; and yet the minister of God who should be ready to explain the nature of an oath, . . . . is breaking these engagements himself. The lamp which should illuminate the sanctuary is rarely seen within its walls.

"The benefits to be derived from clerical residence are incalculable. 1. The minister is neither hurried nor fatigued when he enters upon the duties of the Sabbath. It is the Lord's day; and therefore the Lord's servant should make 'the Sabbath a delight.' 2. The minister's example has great weight on this holy day. The (pious) behaviour of his chil-

dren and his servants, tends to lead others into the paths of holiness. 3. The minister is at hand to advise his parishioners in any little emergency. No intruder will attempt to make inroads when the watchman is at his post. 4. The sick persons in his parish are constantly attended. The good impressions made in the time of sickness are not suffered to wear away without some remonstrance. An evening call, when the poor man has left his work; a religious tract; a word in season; a friendly prayer; these may be blessed to the salvation of the soul. 5. The resident minister is a father to the poor. . . . Dr. Johnson, speaking of the *responsibility* of ministers, once said, 'that a clergyman was the father of a larger family than he could maintain.' 6. Sunday-schools, where a clergyman is resident, may do incalculable good. To these a stranger cannot attend. 7. We might insist upon the exquisite pleasure to be derived from residence. As the good old rector . . . used to say, 'I feel, after a *week's labour* in the vineyard, that which I cannot describe;'

\* The following remarks of Mr. Beachcroft (found in his pocket-book) will prove that in his matured judgment, *field-sports* were not *that species of recreation* which becomes the *clerical labourer*. "January 18, 1811. I had

a joy with which a stranger intermeddleth not.  
 8. How rich the recompence of reward! To say before the tribunal of God, 'Lo! I and the children which God hath given me.' . . . . Let this warning of our blessed Master be written in letters of gold, 'Cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.' Let the same characters record this encouragement, 'Call

felt some scruples as to the propriety of indulging in any field-sports however moderately; I almost made up my mind to put it out of my power by paying no tax of this kind. But my resolution failed me, and I embarked once more in what I knew to be inconsistent with the sanctity of the ministerial life. I wasted but little time, for I rarely availed myself of my power; and took my walk or ride late in the day, when certain duties were concluded. But still I was uncomfortable. I was ashamed of my own weakness; I lamented the pangs of the dying animals, however just man's right may be to 'kill and eat.' I judged my own conduct, as a minister, to be faulty. Life to the soul, death to the body: how different. 'Then shall I not be ashamed,'\* &c. 'If meat,' &c.† 'Let the field be joyful.' Right or wrong, I have saved my own conscience; and I do resolve, with God's grace, if I have done iniquity, to do it no more." Here was the struggle of nature; here was the triumph of faith.

\* Psalm cxix. 6.

† 1 Cor. viii. 13.

the labourers, and give them their hire.' 'Thou hast been faithful in a few things; I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.'"

The paper from whence the foregoing extracts have been made, was, probably, that which *our Transatlantic brethren begged permission to reprint, as one calculated to be useful*, and which they circulated in their own country to a very considerable extent. As no man had been more practically taught than Mr. Beachcroft the solemn lessons conveyed in the above article, so it proceeded with peculiar propriety from his pen.

Mr. Beachcroft also established a weekly lecture at the work-house, for the immediate benefit of those who might be unable to attend the church. That service\* was regularly performed on every Thursday evening, either by himself, or his fellow-labourer. Commencing with prayers, (chiefly taken from the liturgy,) he next expounded a portion of holy Scripture, with his usual simplicity and tender-

\* This species of clerical labour, though confessedly unsanctioned by existing laws or canons, is nevertheless of such unquestionable advantage, particularly to the aged cottager, that in these days of REFORM it ought surely to be legitimated by the British senate.

ness; endeavouring to direct the thoughts of his poorer brethren to that Saviour who is the great dispenser of eternal riches. At the conclusion of the lecture, it was customary to collect weekly donations in behalf of the Church Missionary Society. And in order to excite a due attention to its interests, he also read, on that occasion, such extracts from "The Missionary Register" as might prove the miseries of heathenism, and the possibility of supplanting them with the unspeakable blessings of Christianity.

The school, established in Blunham, and so greatly enlarged by his exemplary diligence and liberality, must next be briefly noticed. More than once did the author witness, on the morning of the Lord's day, that spirit of wisdom and of love, which distinguished the intercourse of Mr. Beachcroft with the children then assembled in the parish school-room. Each appeared eager to perform his allotted task, whether to repeat a portion of the "Church" (or any other) "catechism," or certain passages of Scripture. The quickness of some of the older boys in giving an account of the sermons of the preceding Sabbath, was as creditable to themselves as to their minister. The whole group appeared

to regard him as their friend and father; and Mr. Beachcroft at length dismissed them with an appropriate prayer to Him, who only could incline their ears to his word, and effectually touch their hearts with a sense of his redeeming love.

In this branch of ministerial labour (in the female department of the school he had a skilful and indefatigable coadjutor—even the partner of his days) he took a peculiar delight. No slight experience had convinced him how close is the connexion between ignorance and vice, and how preposterous is the hope of preserving the morals of the poor, by enveloping (if we may so speak) their minds in darkness. His was the maxim of the wise—"It is *not* good that the soul be without knowledge."\* His also was the sober sentiment of the late eloquent and pious Robert Hall†—"These are not the times in which it is safe for a nation to repose in the lap of ignorance. If there was a season when public tranquillity was insured by the absence of knowledge, that season is past." Often did Mr. Beachcroft speak, with the satis-

\* Prov. xix. 2.

† Sermon V. "On the Advantages of Knowledge to the Lower Classes."

faction of a grateful heart, of the seals to his ministry that God had given him from among the *children*. He was apt emphatically to add, "My chief hope is of the young."

Immediately connected with his superintendence of the village-school was a circumstance highly creditable to himself and his dissenting neighbours. The latter came forward and said, they "hoped he would not be offended if they opened a Sunday-school." "His answer (as observes a friend, who supplied the author with the anecdote) was truly catholic—'It always gives me pleasure when good is done.' From that time, if any child left one school for the other, he never received him without first mentioning it to the dissenters." Such liberality may possibly be thought to originate in indifference to the peculiarities of our national establishment. But the conclusion were palpably unjust. It is one thing to act with all the tenderness of charity-towards those who differ from ourselves on the point of ecclesiastical jurisdiction, and it is another to regard that jurisdiction as unimportant. Here the author would appeal to the almost dying charge of a dignitary who will not be suspected of indifference to the esta-



blished church.\* He strongly exhorted his clergy to cultivate the most charitable intercourse with their dissenting brethren, and that for the purpose of Christian peace and conciliation.

A striking instance of the blessing vouchsafed to the parochial labours of Mr. Beachcroft at Blunham, has come to the knowledge of the author. "In the early part of his residence," says a friendly correspondent, "a pair of old people of great Bible knowledge, but void, apparently, of love to God, gave Mr. Beachcroft great pain. He laboured night and day for them, in sickness and in health, and was always with them. Often did they shut their door against him. An old inhabitant, a farmer, used to say, 'Pray, sir, don't go to them; they will never turn!' But Mr. Beachcroft reaped his reward. They went into the workhouse; became quite altered people; their knowledge was turned into faith and humility: they died, confessing nothing but the cross of Christ for salvation; and I have often heard Mr. Beachcroft say, when passing their grave his feelings were indescribable." Never, then, let the minister

\* The late venerable Archdeacon Daubeney.

despair of the recovery of the proudest pharisee from the depths of spiritual darkness, and from the strongest and bitterest enmity of a carnal mind. "With God all things are possible;" and while, by "the foolishness of preaching," (such it appears to the man of worldly wisdom,) He "saves them that believe," He also is pleased to add converts to the church by means of the *private* counsel of his faithful ministers.

with this scriptural conviction, he inquired not what course he might pursue with the least possible difficulty, or with the smallest measure of reproach. He “conferred not with flesh and blood :” consequently he collected his household (as before he had done at Tottenham) at morning and at evening, in a vestibule well fitted for the purpose. There he sang with them praises and thanksgivings to his God ; there he expounded to them the words of eternal life ; and there he prayed with them to the God and Father of all. A holy solemnity appeared to overspread the scene ; a deep attention was evinced by every one present ; as if the seriousness of the master had become, through divine grace, influential on the bosom of the family. Not even a labourer in his employ was uninvited to the domestic altar. More than once has the author witnessed what he is here attempting to describe ; and to himself it was not only a gratifying, but he trusts also a profitable attendance. And, possibly as no doubt it was, that the servants might be practically unaffected by it, the master might say to them, what St. Paul once said to the Ephesians—“I am pure from the blood of all men.” A consolation which never can be enjoyed by those who neglect the

souls of their children or domestics ; and who, in compliance with their own inclinations, or with the maxims of a corrupt world, regard family prayer,\* and family exposition, as works of supererogation, if not of rigour and enthusiasm ; or who avowedly approve the practice, and yet omit it on some such pretence as can neither stand the scrutiny of Him who knows the heart, nor even satisfy the dictates of their own conscience.

Mr. Beachcroft never omitted the performance of this solemn duty out of regard to the taste and prejudices of visitors ; and still less as an extinguisher, or even damper, of the cheerfulness of the social circle. With him it was a perfect axiom, that he who regards devotion as, in any sense, "an intruder on his joys," is incapable of that happiness which consists not only

\* The weighty remarks of "the sober Tillotson," upon the point should be familiar to every Christian master ; namely—"This ('daily prayers to God every morning and evening, in our families, and reading some portion of the holy Scriptures at those times') is so necessary to keep alive and to maintain a sense of God and religion in the minds of men, that, where it is neglected, I do not see how any family can in reason be esteemed a family of Christians, or indeed to have any religion at all."—*Sermon concerning Family Religion.*

in the beatific vision, but also in the eternal worship of God and of the Lamb. If prayer be irksome to us in this world, praise, by a necessary consequence, would be wholly unwelcome in the next. Death does not change the heart.

Is it asked, 'What family prayers did Mr. Beachcroft generally use?' For a time he adopted those prepared and published by Mr. Beane; and which, though perhaps somewhat wanting in simplicity, are truly scriptural in their basis, as well as deeply impressive in their tone. Yet, in the course of a few years, and on his becoming so familiar with the form, that he could easily repeat it, Mr. Beachcroft gradually laid aside the book, and intermingled with its phraseology such words as the occasion might suggest, or his devotional feelings might command. The very idea of such a deviation from his former course may be deemed injudicious by some, and presumptuous by others. Whatever, in religious matters, assumes an extemporaneous aspect is to them a portentous vision. But are not their conceptions inaccurate, and their fears unfounded?

Perhaps, strictly speaking, no prayer is to be considered as extemporaneous. The matter of

it has long been stored in the bosom of the pious worshipper, and its very language is generally that which he has heretofore employed. If, then, there be any thing extemporaneous in the service here supposed, it must principally regard its arrangement and its prevailing spirit. It might not unfitly be compared to a petition offered to a monarch by one who is unprovided with a form, and who is so familiar with forms as to be in no danger, even though he depart from their phraseology, of committing any important error. And essential as, in the author's view, are devotional forms in the *public* worship of the Almighty; and that in order to preclude the sameness, the repetition, and the hesitation, which might else too naturally occur, especially under the unfavourable "frames and feelings" of the minister; and though the remark may sometimes be applicable to *domestic* worship, the prayer which is *not read* is usually the more impressive.\* On the whole, it is far from impossible that the spirit of prayer may accompany the use of forms, and may be altogether want-

\* It is recorded of Archbishop Secker, that, once using *memoriter* the form of "Private Baptism of Infants in Houses," some bystander mistook it for a wholly extemporaneous effusion, and as such greatly admired it.

ing when the form is habitually laid aside. Good men have accordingly made use of both methods, in their approaches to a throne of grace. Such, of late years, was the daily practice of Mr. Beachcroft. His mind was far too liberal to be enslaved to custom; yet far too wise to reject it, whenever it might become profitable to edification.

Nevertheless, it was once remarked, that "Mr. Beachcroft must be a weak man, since he admits of psalm-singing at the time of family-prayer." But is there any necessary alliance between imbecility of judgment and the practice of domestic psalmody? To reply in the affirmative, were almost to question the wisdom of the Supreme Being: for has He not commanded us to "sing praises to his name;" and without any restriction relative to time or place? And if this be the only point on which our judgment is impeachable; even that the walls of our habitation echo with the praises of our God; that impeachment will shortly yield to the plaudit of angelic hosts, and even to the gracious approbation of the Lord of all.

"A perpetual fear and love of his holy name" was a leading feature in the domestic character of Mr. Beachcroft. In him was deeply seated

that master principle of action. The servants had no occasion to remark, (what in too many families is frequently observed with justice,) "My master's prayers are good, but his practice is a constant contradiction to them." He was not only aware how acutely the members of a family observe every inconsistency in a religious master, whether it relate to temper, to conversation, or even to look and manner, but he remembered also that the eye of God was upon him. "*Thou, Lord, seest me,*" was by grace inscribed upon his bosom. On this account he was anxious to exclude from his habitation whatever might offend or dishonour his divine Master; and to establish whatever might tend to the glory of his great name. Like "the sweet Psalmist of Israel," he would have his household, as well as himself, "walk before God with a perfect heart." All irregularity and excess were therefore forbidden to his domestics, on pain of dismissal from his service. Nor were they left at liberty to frequent those scenes of pleasure (such as the fair, the race, &c.) which are eventually a source of pain. Such wise rules were adopted by him as might secure regularity of hours, an exact perform-



ance of the allotted work, and the improvement of time, especially to religious purposes. For Mr. Beachcroft carefully supplied them with such books as might inform the mind and spiritually impress the heart.

His love to God also led him to exclude from the domestic scene all such miscalled amusements as dissipate the master's time, and have a direct tendency to corrupt the morals of his servants. The luxurious and protracted entertainment, the ball, the card party, were never witnessed under his roof. The sensuality and frivolity of the former, and the gambling character of the latter, were with him sufficient reasons for keeping them at a distance from his habitation. That the card-table is a nursery of gambling, he maintained in common with all unprejudiced observers. For who will soberly deny that, when cards are admitted into the *parlour*, they can scarcely be excluded from the *servants' hall*? Or who can question the fact, that servants in many families "play," and occasionally lose considerable sums of money? Instances have occurred of their gambling to that desperate degree as to lose their all; and then their vicious career has too naturally

been closed by suicide.\* On these accounts Mr. Beachcroft would in no way countenance a practice which must wound his own conscience, and make others to offend.

His was the invaluable faculty, the gift of divine grace, of accurately discerning between real and fictitious happiness. He could penetrate the gay exterior of such amusements as we have just noticed, and discover that essential evil which they respectively contain; such as the prodigal expenditure of time; the dissipation of thought; the elevation of the spirits to the ultimate injury of the temper; the impatience, the jealousy, the bitter disappointment of the card-player; the exhaustion that follows excitement in the votaries of fashionable gaiety; and their consequent inability for a time to enter on any rational or useful occupation.

Mr. Beachcroft was so wholly alienated from such mere shadows of enjoyment, that to many he might seem entirely to have missed its substance. Yet, as appears by the remarks of one who was no unfrequent visitor at Blunham, and

\* Such was the untimely end of a youth, who about a year ago attended the Bath races; and who had *previously* borne a respectable moral character. The melancholy fact appeared in the "Bath and Cheltenham Gazette."

certainly no mean judge, his happiness survived his renunciation of "the pomps and vanities of this world."

The remarks are as follow : " After a visit of several weeks at Blunham, I am much struck with the invincible sweetness and cheerfulness of Mr. Beachcroft's temper. It is evident that *all* his treasure consists in the favour and service of his God. It is on this account that no neglect, no disappointment, no sickness, ruffles him. Happiness and piety are in his view synonymous. After church, after family prayer, or spiritual conversation, his joy seemed redoubled. The singleness of his eye was as striking as his happiness. There was no thought of *self*, but simple love to God and man. This made him so engaging, so courteous, so tender to the touch of sorrow. He never seemed to lose sight of his being a pilgrim on earth, and very frequently adverted to death, and the Christian's victory over death as a blessed theme of meditation and discourse. He showed me the spot within the communion-rail of his little church, where, he said, he hoped to lie ; and this, he added, shall be my epitaph.\* . . . . . He had the happy art of connecting every *little* blessing (if

\* Vide the last chapter, in which that epitaph occurs.

any may be called little) with the love of God ; and he was so humble, that no one could *offend* him. I knew not which most to admire, his ministerial devotedness, or his personal eminence in the fruits of the Spirit. Dated May, 1816. Memoranda."

A strict regard for the spiritualities of the Christian sabbath was not less discernible in the domestic conduct of Mr. Beachcroft. He not only made such arrangements as might prevent its positive profanation, but such also as through divine grace might insure its profitable observance. \* Newspapers were then excluded, be-

\* We would here put it to the candid consideration of the reader, if those who print and circulate our *Sunday* newspapers are not likely to suffer in their morals by such an occupation ? Can they fear God, while violating his (fourth) commandment ; and if they fear not God, will they be disposed to "honour the king ?" Let a leading *Sunday* journal be still emblazoned with that motto, which implies that its editor performs both these momentous duties, still it behoves all (especially the *ministers* of God) to pause and prove the fact before they admit the presumption. And may not the present awful growth of infidelity be connected with the pot house perusal of such *Sunday* newspapers ? Are not thousands in the metropolis thus (to say the least) unprofitably employed in the very hour of divine service ?

cause their contents were likely to secularize the thoughts, and to shut out the pleasures that result from communion with God. All unnecessary work was also suspended in his household; no secular orders (a fearful 'let and hindrance' to *Sabbath* occupations) were then given to his servants; nor was meat dressed upon the Lord's day, for himself or any member of his family. However rigid the regulation might appear to others, to the man of sober thought its importance may easily be demonstrated. First, because religion, considered as a rule of life and a source of consolation, is as necessary to servants as to masters. This point, when denied on spiritual, is sometimes readily conceded on political accounts. And how can servants be expected to acquire religious principle, if (which too frequently occurs) detained from church by those labours which are chiefly subservient to the gratification of the master's appetite? Yet in how many of our splendid mansions is the temporal comfort of the latter thus recklessly preferred to the eternal welfare of the former? In the metropolis the sin is dominant, and is still apparent in those 'high places' of our land, where the light of vital Christianity should be especially concentrated and displayed;—as if the

“ world without souls,” so happily imagined by an author of Christian notoriety, \* were realized in our fashionable circles, servants are so much occupied in preparing or waiting at the Sunday dinner; that (as the Bishop of London has shown with such seasonable boldness in his late “ Pastoral Letter ”) to *them* the blessings of the day are almost inevitably lost—a sin to be fearfully accounted for to “ the Judge of all the earth.” How far honesty can prevail where piety is thus excluded, let the master’s experience decide. Very memorable, though homely, were the words of the American reformer, † “ I would not trust an habitual Sabbath-breaker the length of his nose.” ‡

Mr. Beachcroft’s example gave weight to his domestic exhortations relative to the devout observance of the Lord’s day. Did he then direct his servants to “ search the Scriptures?” The sacred volume was in his hands.—Did he then

\* Rev. J. W. Cunningham, vicar of Harrow.

† Washington.

‡ Should the reader wish to see the nature of the Christian Sabbath lucidly explained, and its obligations powerfully enforced, let him read a little volume of Sermons upon the subject, recently published by the Rev. Daniel Wilson.

advise them to “talk of all God’s wondrous works?” His own conversation was such as might minister grace to his hearers. Not abruptly nor by force, but naturally, discreetly, charitably, would he rise to divine subjects, especially to “the love of Christ,” and glance at the peace and consolation which frequent the Christian bosom. Or did he counsel his domestics to devote to prayer and meditation a due portion of the Sabbath? Mr. Beachcroft, for those blessed purposes, was then known to enter into his own closet. How great is the importance of a master’s example to his household, the following fact (as stated by Bishop Horne \*) is well calculated to prove. A gentleman once visited his servant, when lying in a condemned cell, and asked him, “Had you no fear of death, which the laws of your country inflict upon the crime?” (alluding to that he had committed;) when the servant instantly returned this cutting answer, and that with immediate reference to the *blasphemous conversation of his master*, “You had removed my greatest terror; why should I fear the less?”

When so opposite to “the course of this

\* Vide Sermon on Psalm xxxiv. 11.

world" was Mr. Beachcroft's mode of observing the Lord's day, did he thereby inflict a penance either on himself or his domestics? He did so in the opinion of those who are dead to the spiritual advantages and pleasures of the day of rest. To them it is so insupportably dull, and insufferably gloomy, that they resort to visiting, to feasting, to worldly conversation and employment, in order to endure the season. But with Mr. Beachcroft, sabbath pleasures emanated from sabbath occupations. An air of religious cheerfulness appeared to be communicated to his household, as if they had been taught by his example to call the Sabbath a delight! As a *man* he was still duly interested in earthly things. As a *Christian* he was intent on heavenly.

And when the Sabbath was past, he did not (to use the expression of the witty South) carefully lay by his religion as a Sunday coat, till the next Sabbath should arrive. He carried the spirit of religion through the whole week. Were his affections excited? God was their supreme centre. Of self he very rarely spoke, and for self, we venture to add, he yet more rarely acted. In the midst of comparative abundance he was strictly temperate, his wealth was evi-



denced by beneficence, and not by luxurious indulgence and vain display.

In what spirit did Mr. Beachcroft act towards the several members of his family? *Children* he had not; a circumstance which proved a considerable trial of his faith, as he was intensely fond of them. "If," said he on one occasion, "I had children, I fear I should love them too much?" Hence he argued that God had mercifully withheld them. And though children have been beautifully described as "a golden link" between their parents, Mr. Beachcroft's conjugal affection needed not its mighty aid. During the severe and protracted illness which afflicted the partner of his days, his deep and Christian sympathy, his attendance in her sick room, and the tone of his correspondence respecting her, might prove him a most affectionate husband; and one whose love was formed, with whatever human imperfection, after the model of his Lord and Saviour's. (Ephes. v. 25.)

In imitation of the same example did Mr. Beachcroft uniformly act towards his aged and venerable mother. Of the respect with which he treated her, and of the affection with which he studied her temporal and eternal welfare, of his

little as well as great attentions to one so dear to him, of his anxiety respecting her health, of his unceasing prayers in her behalf; in short, of the solidity and lustre of his filial virtue, it were not easy to speak in exaggerated terms. That virtue will more distinctly appear in his *last* correspondence with his mother, which will be inserted in a future chapter.

To a friend he writes concerning her: "Such parents as we possess are not given to many."  
*Blunham, April 8, 1820.*

And *she* thus addressed Mr. Beachcroft in the year 1819:—"When you arrived at manhood, you led me on toward heaven, . . . and you never gave me a moment's uneasiness by your conduct."

His uniform kindness to his servants bespoke his habitual remembrance of that Master who is in heaven. Their comfort, temporal and spiritual, was an object of his anxious thought; their services were generously recompensed, their faults calmly and tenderly, and at the same time, firmly reproofed. He so blended condescension with dignity, and kindness with authority, as to furnish a bright example to every master of a household. How much the credit of religion is injured by an opposite de-

portment, (especially in the ministers of Christ,) those only can conceive, who have witnessed its unhappy impression on the minds of servants.

When such was the conduct of Mr. Beachcroft in the family circle, it can be no matter of surprise that his abode was not unfrequented by the wise and pious. Not that he repelled others. Even they admired his benevolence and confessed his cheerfulness. His spirits being naturally good, his manners engaging, and his mind playful, his presence was generally, and to a high degree, attractive. A chastised sportiveness of conversation, allied as it was to much interesting anecdote, made him a delightful companion to young persons in particular. Those who were domesticated with Mr. Beachcroft would scarcely be unwilling to apply to him the language of the bard of Paradise:—

“ How charming is divine philosophy !  
Not harsh and crabbed, as dull fools suppose,  
But . . . . .  
. . . . a perpetual feast of nectar'd sweets,  
Where no crude surfeit reigns,”

## CHAPTER X.

*His retirement in the closet—His Diary and Correspondence.*

WHEN a piece of machinery has been contemplated in its principal parts and operations, the laboratory where it was produced must prove an interesting object, and a matter of laudable curiosity. Of what materials it was composed, in what manner they were united, and on what principle they act, are questions which will then occur to a reflecting mind. Even so, having regarded Mr. Beachcroft as a preacher, a parish priest, and also as the master of a family, we may next naturally ask, Whence sprung his fidelity and zeal in each of the above departments? In what way were they maintained? What was he in the *closet*?

We are aware of the difficulty of replying to

the latter question. Strictly speaking, none but Mr. Beachcroft himself could answer it in all respects. He only could declare with certainty, what was his employment, and what more especially were his thoughts, when he retired into his own study. Nevertheless the author was so well acquainted with his habits, and enjoyed such close intimacy with his deceased friend, that he may venture to speak even of the secret movements of his devoted spirit.

Mr. Beachcroft in the retirement of the closet had immediately in view two very momentous objects: namely, the improvement of his mind by study, and the purification of his heart by prayer. He pursued the former by devoting to general literature a certain, though in truth a very limited, portion of his time. Desirous to preserve, and even augment, his classical attainments, as of no unimportant use in the province of theology, he still felt the comparative insignificance of studies that terminate in death. He could enter into the dying sentiments of the pre-eminently learned Selden; namely, "*at this hour I desire to know nothing save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.*" Mr. Beachcroft knew how to subordinate classical to scriptural pursuits. The Bible (to borrow the language

of our ancient homilies) “was much in his hand, much in his eyes, and much in his heart” also. Not exclusively however, since almost to the close of life he explored with interest and satisfaction the works of our most approved divines. His mind was familiar with their sentiments, in proportion as they were sound and spiritual.

We subjoin his private observations on a volume of the above description, dated Feb. 1811.

“Lady —, with whom I had been acquainted for some little time, lent me, among other books, ‘Mason’s Spiritual Treasury.’ In my boyish days I had read ‘Sturm’s Reflections for every Day in the Year.’ . . . But I wanted stronger nourishment for the soul, with which to begin each day, and in ‘Mason’s Treasury’ I found that food which fully satisfied me. Some few of the expressions may be a little coarse, and might possibly offend the too delicate inquirer. But when the sacred fruit has thus fallen into the dust, take off the outward coat, pare it, and it will be found ample to repay you by its sweets. At other times, the language, the style, the sentiment, is forcible indeed. The apple of gold has its net-work of silver. Nothing can be more spiri-

tual, or more likely to produce conviction. So much pleased was I with the book, that the only difficulty with me was to refrain from reading more than the portion allotted to each day. In February, indeed, I had a double repast ; for the January Reflections not having been perused, I added the corresponding day of the month to my otherwise single paper ; and drew a copious stream from this refreshing fountain. May I profit by such an additional mean of grace ! May my treasure be in heaven, and there may my heart be also ! May the pearl of great price be mine, and may I be rich in all spiritual wisdom and knowledge !" —R. P. B.

Yet, however charmed or edified by the works of the Christian theologian, Mr. Beachcroft suffered them not to come into any competition whatever with the word of God. He "*searched* the Scriptures." "What is truth?" he asked, with the oracles of truth before him. "To the law and to the testimony," was with him an inviolable maxim. Accordingly when corresponding, a few years since, with his memorialist, he expressed himself to the following effect :—"On all difficult points in divinity I must ever be allowed to form my own judgment : here I cannot yield to men fallible as my-

self." His private opinions bore that resemblance to his public professions which results from genuine sincerity. For in his address to young persons, "after confirmation," he thus emphatically spoke.\* "If, then, the Scriptures be the infallible word of God, . . . by which we shall, every one of us, be judged, who would not wish to be intimately acquainted with their contents? Can parents be too anxious? Can instructors, can *ministers of religion*, be too diligent?" These sentiments may bespeak the protestant spirit of Mr. Beachcroft; for no man was more conscientious than himself in paying all due respect to ecclesiastical superiors, while no man could be more observant of the precepts, "*prove all things, hold fast that which is good.*" He was alive to the tremendous danger of surrendering our judgment to man, where the interests of eternity are at stake. Therefore, while he respected human, he was governed by divine, authority.

Such being the daily exercise of Mr. Beachcroft, his mind derived from thence fresh supplies of light, and health, and vigour. His familiarity with the sacred text, (a familiarity

\* Vide Beachcroft's Sermons, vol. ii. p. 313.



which is remarkably apparent in his printed sermons,) together with his clear and enlarged conception of their import, was the result of *studying the Bible*. He proved, as all who make the same experiment will prove, how utterly unfounded is the idea that the Bible is too difficult a book to be read by the generality of men; and that its very mysteriousness naturally leads them into error. Mr. Beachcroft had honestly adopted the sentiments of the immortal Chillingworth,\*—"When you say that *unlearned and ignorant men cannot understand Scripture*, I would desire you to come out of the cloud and tell us what you mean; whether that they cannot understand all Scripture, or that they cannot understand any Scripture, or that they cannot understand so much as is sufficient for their direction to heaven. If the *first*, I believe the learned are in the same case. If the *second*, every man's experience will confute you; for who is there that is not capable of a sufficient understanding of the story, the precepts, the promises, the threats, of the gospel? If the *third*, that they may understand something, but not enough for their salvation, I ask you first, why then doth *St. Paul* say to *Timo-*

\* "Religion of Protestants," folio, p. 88.

thy, that the Scriptures are able to make him wise unto salvation? Why doth *St. Austin* say, "*Ea quæ manifesté posita sunt in sacris Scripturis, omnia continent quæ pertinent ad fidem, moresque vivendi.*" While the views of Mr. Beachcroft strictly coincided with the foregoing, his contemplations in the closet aided his expositions in the church, and stamped upon his every discourse a character of sound, vital, and occasionally of experimental, piety. Being himself thus "taught of God," he went forth with increasing ability to teach his people.

We say, "being taught of God;" for in the case before us, prayer went hand in hand with meditation on the sacred volume. Mr. Beachcroft had learned, in the school of his heavenly Master, that we are not "*sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves, but that our sufficiency is of God.*"\* His, therefore, was the humble, the earnest supplication of the Psalmist, "Open Thou mine eyes!" "Incline my heart unto Thy testimonies!"† He looked to the Spirit of God as the only infallible interpreter of what he had Himself indited; and implored his Almighty aid for his flock, as well as

\* 2 Cor. iii. 5.

† Psalm cxix.

for himself, in the spirit of the following petition.\*

“Divin Esprit, vous qui d’un charbon de feu purifiates les lèvres du prophète ; et les fites servir d’organe à votre adorable parole, purifiez ma langue, et faites que je puisse dignement remplir le saint ministère que vous m’avez confié. Eloignez de moi tout ce qui n’est pas de vous. Ne m’inspirez point d’autres pensées que celles qui sont propres à toucher, à persuader, à convertir. Donnez moi, comme à l’apôtre des nations, non pas une éloquence vaine qui n’a pour but que de contenter la curiosité des hommes, mais une éloquence Chrétienne, qui tirant toute sa force de votre Evangile, a la force de rémuer les consciences, de sanctifier les ames, de gagner les pécheurs, et de les soumettre à l’empire de votre loi. Préparez les esprits de mes auditeurs à recevoir les saintes lumières qu’il vous plaira de me communiquer ; et comme en leur parlant je ne dois point avoir d’autre vue que leur salut, faites qu’ils m’écoutent avec un désir sincère de ce salut éternel que je leur préche ; puisque c’est l’essentielle disposition à toutes les graces qu’ils doivent attendre de vous. C’est ce que

\* By the learned and pious *Pourdouloué*.

je vous demande, Seigneur, par l'intercession, &c. &c."

What was his secret dependence on the succour of divine grace, may also be collected from the following extract.\*

"He (God) will prepare the soil; He will break up the fallow ground; He will command the sun to shine, and the gentle dew to fall; He . . . will make the wilderness like Eden, and the desert like the garden of the Lord; so that, instead of the thorn shall come up the fir-tree, and instead of the briar shall come up the myrtle-tree."

These reviving thoughts were so devoutly cherished in his retirement, that he could not but feel their force in his public ministrations. The sermon that edified from the pulpit had, in the spirit of prayer, been planned and digested in the closet. So intent was Mr. Beachcroft on deliberately giving himself to his subject, before he publicly discussed it, that he generally chose his text, and formed a slight outline of his sermon, on the Sunday evening, and completed it on the Tuesday following. It was a favourite remark of his, "I will not offer

\* Sermons, vol. ii. p. 192.

to the Lord that which has cost me nought." So scrupulously did he observe the rule, that he would not venture on an exposition of any part of Scripture in his family, without having duly considered it on the preceding evening.

The same spirit of devout preparation for the pulpit may be traced in the subjoined passage, extracted from the fifteenth volume of the "Christian Observer," and signed R. P. B.

"I have been much struck with the very categorical, and somewhat flippant manner, in which some young divines in the present day bring forward their views of the most mysterious and difficult points of religious doctrine. They ought to *read*, and *meditate*, and *pray*, *before* they *preach*. They speak as veterans before they have experienced the hardships of a single campaign. When discussing such subjects, what holy caution was used by our Hookers, Halls, Leightons, Beveridges—those burning and shining lights! Their writings, how deeply doctrinal; yet how alive do they always seem to the obligations of every moral duty! May we follow them as they followed Christ!"

Yet we shall very inadequately estimate the closet occupations of Mr. Beachcroft, if we imagine that his only object was faithfulness and

efficiency as a *minister*: he was not less anxious respecting his character as a *man*. To adorn the doctrine which he preached, and to honour with the life that Redeemer whom he exalted with his tongue, was, in his view, a paramount attainment. Without it the eloquence of the preacher were an empty sound; his most spiritual injunctions an insult to the understanding of his hearers; and his loudest warnings that daring mockery of God which must one day be fearfully accounted for. Mr. Beachcroft was therefore familiar with the devotional sentiment of David, "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me."\* His was the petition of the Psalmist, "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me!" He only who knows its secrets can tell how frequently and how fervently Mr. Beachcroft besought his God to cleanse *the thoughts of his heart* by the inspiration of his Holy Spirit. In all his spiritual combats prayer was his strength and his defence; in sorrow he called upon the Lord till he was heard and comforted; and the more he experienced the joys of communion

\* See an admirable Discourse, by Witherspoon, on this verse.

with God, the more he sought and valued its consecrated scene.

Deeply and indelibly impressed upon the author's memory is an observation once made to him by Mr. Beachcroft on the happiness which results from *prayer*. "If," said he, "at any time my spirits fail, I immediately have recourse to prayer, and thus they are mercifully restored." His words are, of course, to be understood in a general sense. As a member of the church militant, he knew what it is to mourn, as well as to rejoice in spirit. Yet, in the most distressing seasons of the soul, prayer for the all-sufficient grace of the Divine Comforter usually succeeded in turning his sorrow into joy. Could "the man of business," who pretends that he has no time for devotional exercises, have witnessed their happy influence in the case before us, he would not so easily dismiss their claims on an immortal spirit. Then might he have learned the lesson once taught by the lips of *Barrow*: "What *business* is so important as that of our eternal salvation? and if *time* be valuable, *eternity*, which comprehends all time, is infinitely more so." As Hannah More has admirably said, "We must find time

to *die*, and therefore should find time to *pray* !” a maxim, the force of which was habitually felt by Mr. Beachcroft ; and which ought to be the “golden rule” of every overseer and shepherd of the flock of Christ. The hireling and the mere formalist never enter their closet for the purpose of genuine devotion. Their walls may testify to their taste, their literature, their research, and the intensity of their classic ardour, but not to their thirst after God in the spiritualities of prayer and meditation ; and to their “heart’s desire” for the eternal salvation of their flocks. Happy, then, is that minister of Christ, of whom, as of Mr. Beachcroft, it may be truly said—

“ When one who holds communion with the skies,  
Has filled his urn where these pure waters rise,  
And once more mingles with us meaner things,  
’Tis ev’n as if an angel shook his wings,  
Immortal fragrance fills the circuit wide,  
And tells us whence his treasures were supplied.”\*

The *Diary* of Mr. Beachcroft will throw an additional light upon his closet exercises. We subjoin extracts from it.

\* Cowper’s “Charity,” vol. i. p. 158.



**" Jan. 10, 1811. Began a journal of my heart after many years procrastination.**

**" Lord, make me understand thy law,  
Shew what my faults have been,  
And from thy mercy let me draw  
Pardon for all my sin."**

**" Read my Bible; found great comfort in the last verses of the 11th of St. Matthew. Began a little work on ' prayer,' lent me by Lady — ; the preface very spiritual. I want attention and assistance in all religious knowledge. Company called, that made me thankful I did not live either near or with them, to be tempted by their idle talk. Lord, give me a true spirit of prayer.**

**" 11th. Found some very strong texts in the 12th of St. Matthew, 35, 36, 37; and also the 13th chapter—all which it would be well to remember. Had a visit from Lady —. Lord, lead me in the right way !**

**" 12th. Stayed at home all day. Read my Bible with more than usual attention. Lord, make me to understand thy holy word !**

**" 13th. Went twice to church; but had but little power over my thoughts. Taught the children. Grant, O Lord, that in teaching others, I myself may not be a castaway !**

“ 14th. Stayed at home all day ; read but little, but found a great truth, that unless I forgive, I cannot look for forgiveness from my heavenly Father.

“ 15th. Give me, O Lord, the regenerating influence of thy Holy Spirit, and help me to cry out with the blind man, ‘ Lord, have mercy upon me !’

“ 16th. Not very well. Read two chapters of St. Matthew, but not with that attention that becometh those who read the word of God.

“ 17th. Read my Bible. ‘ Watch, therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour when the Son of man cometh.’

“ 18th. Read my Bible . . . . Lord, grant that, through thy dear Son, I may not receive the sentence to be pronounced upon the goats.

“ 19th. Did not read my Bible till night. Teach me, O Lord, to give thee the morning of each day ; and grant that I may not crucify my Saviour afresh by my sins, which are many.

“ 20th. Went to church twice. I want power to collect my thoughts. If faith cometh by hearing, my faith will fail me, O Lord, without thy gracious help, to enable me to call home my wandering thoughts.

“ 21st. Learned an Olney hymn: ‘ Lord be the pilot to my shattered bark.’

“ 22nd. Lord, suffer me not to murmur against thy will.

“ 23rd. Lord, make me thankful for the friends thou sendest to my comfort.

“ 24th. Had many friends to see me. Lord, set a watch over the door of my lips.

“ 25th. Mr. and Mrs. — called ; and my dear good friend —. ‘ Judge not, that ye be not judged.’

“ 26th. ‘ Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief.’

“ 28th. Grant, O Lord, that through afflictions I may be brought unto thee.

“ 29th. Grant, Lord, that I may ask in prayer, believing.

“ 30th. Heard a beautiful sermon of Bishop Horne’s on the day read. Lord, soften, I pray thee, my hard heart.

“ Feb. 1. . . . Beware of Peter’s denial of Christ: and ask yourself, ‘ Whether it is you who betray your Master?’

“ 2nd. Lord, increase my faith.

“ 3rd. Went twice to church. A happy day with the children ; (meaning the school

children.) Lord grant that I may give the glory to thee.

“ 4th. Grant, O Lord, that I may never more deny thee.

“ 6th. Lord, may I never forget thee.

“ 7th. Be with me, O Lord, in my going out and coming in.

“ 9th. Teach me to esteem others better than myself.

“ 10th. Went to church. ‘ Watch and pray, lest ye enter into temptation. The spirit truly is ready, but the flesh is weak.’

“ 11th. Grant, O Lord, that my faith fail not.

“ 12th. Grant, O Lord, that I may believe to my soul’s health.

“ 13th. ‘ Rebuke me not in thine anger, nor chasten me in thy heavy displeasure, O Lord.’

“ 14th. ——— came to dinner. Blessed is she that believeth.

“ 15th. Faith without works is dead.

“ 16th. Grant, O Lord, that I may do good offices for thy sake.

“ 17th. Make me, O Lord, to walk with thee, as thy servant Enoch did.

“ 18th. ‘ Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.’

“ 19th. Grant, Lord, that I may have a house not made with hands eternal in the heavens, the rock of which is Christ.

“ 20th. Make me, O Lord, to do unto others as I should wish they would do unto me.

“ 21st. Lord, grant that mine may be an honest and true heart, that I may receive the word with joy, and bring forth fruit with patience.

“ 22nd. Lord grant that I may be one whom my Saviour will graciously call his brother.

“ 23rd. O Lord, send forth labourers into thy harvest, and assist them with thy blessed Spirit.

“ 24th. Went to church. The Lord was not with me in my prayers. Lord, go not far from me, lest the devil persecute and slay me, and there be none to deliver me.

“ 25th. Lord, grant that I may sit like Mary at the feet of Jesus, and choose that good part which shall not be taken away.

“ 26th. Take heed, therefore, that the light in thee be not darkness.

“ 27th. Lord, let thy presence always be with me.

“ 28th. Remember that there is nothing co-

vered that shall not be revealed, nor hid that shall not be known.

“ March 1st. Mr. — called. ‘ Pride goeth before a fall.’ Be clothed with humility.

“ 3rd. Went to church. Thou that teachest others, teachest thou not thyself?

“ 4th. Strive to enter in at the strait gate.

“ 6th. Make me, O Lord, to see the need I have of a Saviour, and to put my trust in him.

“ 9th. Lord, be merciful to me a sinner!

“ 10th. Lord, clothe me with the robe of my Saviour’s righteousness.

“ 12th. Make me, O Lord, to improve each hour before the day of grace is fled.

“ 13th. O Lord, my thoughts are not hid from thee. Direct them, therefore, I pray thee.

“ 16th. Give me, O Lord, that faith which worketh by love, that by works my faith may be made perfect.

“ 17th. Went to church. Lord, I have need of strength for the duties of the day, for thou knowest how I have fainted.

“ 18th. Be thou, O Lord, the physician of my sin-sick soul.

“ 19th. Grant, O Lord, that I may lean to the cross of Christ for my salvation.

“ 20th. O Lord, take from me all self-confidence and self-righteousness.

“ 23rd. Make me, O Lord, a true Christian in deed and in word.

“ 24th. Grant, O Lord, that by hearing, my faith may be increased by the influences of thy Holy Spirit.

“ 25th. Let not my soul be sick as well as my body.

“ 26th. Grant, O Lord, that I may drink of the vine in thy kingdom.

“ 27th. Give me, O Lord, of that spiritual water, that I thirst not.

“ 28th. Lord, I pray thee know me, that I have the love of God in me.

“ 29th. Lord, hold thou up my goings in thy paths, that my footsteps slip not.

“ April 6th. Lord, grant that I may believe thee to be the resurrection and the life.

“ 7th. Give me, O Lord, a humble, teachable spirit.

“ 8th. Keep me, O Lord, from crucifying thee afresh with my affections and lusts.

“ 11th. Lord, suffer me not to take thy name in vain.

“ 12th. Lord, make me to remember my

blessed Saviour's sufferings, and never to murmur at the cross which I bear.

" 15th. Teach me, O Lord, to look up to thee for support in all things.

" 16th. Suffer me not, O Lord, to have any God beside thee.

" 17th. May thy grace be sufficient for me.

" 18th. Lord, grant that I may give all possible honour and glory to thee, the triune God.

" 19th. Lord, give me that peace of mind which passeth all understanding.

" 20th. Lord, teach me to bear with the faults of others, and to look and consider how great my own are.

" 20th. Preached. Lord, give success to all thy faithful servants.

" 22d. Make me, O Lord, a branch of the true vine.

" 23rd. Shew me, O Lord, what thou wouldst have me to do.

" 24th. Grant, O Lord, that I may place no confidence in the flesh.

" 26th. Make me, O Lord, to love thee more and more every day.

" 27th. Subdue, O Lord, the pride of my heart.



“ 29th. I know, O Lord, that thou wilt not the death of a sinner.

“ May 6th. Make me, O Lord, to bear with the infirmities of others.

“ 8th. O Lord, strengthen me in the great work of my salvation.

“ 9th. Lord, take from mine eyes the scales of unbelief.

“ 10th. Suffer me not, O Lord, to persecute thee with my sins.

“ 13th. Lord, grant that I may seek with all diligence that happy country where sin and sorrow shall be no more.

“ 15th. Lord, grant that I may speak boldly when called upon to speak in thy name.

“ 17th. Make me, O Lord, to suspect myself a hypocrite, that I may be brought to strict examination.

“ 19th. Lord, hold thou me up that I may not slumber in my devotions.

“ 20th. Help me, O Lord, to hold communion with thee.

“ 26th. Make me, O Lord, to watch, . . . lest the devil scatter his tares among the wheat.

“ 28th. Make me, O Lord, to have a consci-

ence void of offence towards thee and towards man.

“ 29th. Lord, grant that I may never do evil that good may come.

“ 30th. Should I be called on to testify of thee, O Lord, teach me by thy Spirit what to utter.

“ June 1st. Make me, O Lord, to rejoice in communion with thy saints on earth.

“ 2d. Lord, let thy word run and be glorified.

“ 3rd. Lord, make me to love thy courts.

“ 4th. Give the king thy judgments, O Lord.

“ 5th. Be thou, O Lord, our friend on earth and in heaven.”

Another private paper, written by Mr. Beachcroft, may not be unacceptable to the reader.

*“ Rules to examine whether we are in the  
faith.*

“ 1. Is the world insipid ?

“ 2. Sin hateful ?

“ 3. The word of God sweet ?

“ 4. The saints dear ?

“ 5. Jesus Christ precious ?

“ 6. Prayer engaging ?

“ 7. Religion and its ordinances, attractive and delightful ?

“ 8. Death welcome ? ”

We must still prolong the chapter, for the sake of another document from the pen of Mr Beachcroft, found among his private papers :—

“ June 18, 1820. After seventeen years’ permission to preach, however imperfectly, the gospel of God, it is His good pleasure to confine me, for a Sabbath, to my own house. It was the grace of God which first influenced my corrupt heart to give up myself to the work of the ministry; and in any case where success has attended my poor labours, that grace must have opened the heart of the person benefited, and have taught me how to speak. It is my firm resolution to devote my remaining strength; be it little or much, to the service of God, and I pray Him to teach me in what manner the most effectually to exert myself. I see that sickness is no time for repentance. Blessed be God that I have not altogether delayed the great work of salvation. I find submission to the will of God, which by nature we all dislike, delightful when taught by the Spirit of God. And how truly blessed in their acts of obedience must

our first parents, upon this principle, have been before they sinned. Religion must consist in love; love to God, who has loved us in Christ Jesus. The great subject of all that delights and supports me, when called from every other pursuit, is *the fulness of Christ as a Saviour*. Equal to all my wants, standing in my place, the just for the unjust, to bring me to God. what has the believer to fear? ‘O thou of little faith, wherefore dost thou doubt?’ Let me cast all my care upon God, for He hath cared, and doth care, for me. I pray to realize, so far as God sees good for me, the joys of heaven, and to flee from the wrath to come; to have a tender love for the souls and bodies of men, and to exalt the Saviour even with my dying tongue.”

To the same effect he once expressed himself to the author:—“Now that I am ill and can do nothing for Christ, I rejoice to meditate on all that He has done for me.” So, when writing to his dear and venerable mother, in February, 1811, he said,—“I never yet could find any great difference in situation. I seem to carry my own treasure with me in my own breast, or rather, to say the whole truth, the casket is every day empty, and God most

abundantly fills it. I should not thus speak of myself; . . . but I wish to ascribe all the glory to Him, who has given me every blessing."

We will now close the chapter with a brief reference to his prospect of elevation in the church; and that arising from his intimacy with the then head\* of the administration. Mr. Beachcroft thus wrote upon the subject to a valued friend :—

" March 26, 1824.

" MY DEAR SIR,

. . . . .

" I can now and then look back and see how astonishingly events have been ordered by a gracious Providence; and then I say to myself, ' Perhaps the publicity, and popularity, and high name, which kind friends wish for me, (little knowing my infirmities, and only seeing the best side,) would have been my ruin.'

" Very sincerely yours,

" R. P. BEACHCROFT."

This was the language, not of a disappointed worldling, but of a meek and lowly Christian, whose hope, whose treasure, was above, and who was satisfied with that honour which cometh from God.

\* Lord Goderich.

In a word, the closet was to Mr. Beachcroft the very palladium of the soul ; insomuch that he once remarked with the deepest sincerity to the author, "*I am never so strong as on my knees.*"

## CHAPTER XI.

*His social Character.*

As we have now traced the religious progress of Mr. Beachcroft, from the pulpit to the cottage, from the cottage to the bosom of his family, and from thence to his own closet, we may next follow him into society, in order to mark his consistency as the result of Christian principle and constant communion with God. Here we do not use the word "society" in its prevailing acceptation. No expression in the English language has been more variously interpreted, and few have been more injuriously applied. Under the term "society" is comprehended every grade of human intercourse, from the most elegant even to the most vulgar ; from "the communion of saints," down to the con-

federacy of daring and abandoned sinners. "Good society," at one time implies what is highly intellectual, and therefore profitable to the mind ; at another, what is dissipated, and therefore directly calculated to unnerve and injure it. By "good society" in places of fashionable resort is intended one continued round of dinners, of assemblies, and of balls. With the *Christian*, however, no society is strictly good but that which is religious also ; or which is animated and governed by supreme love to God, and whose prevailing object is to do all to his glory.

In such society reason is allowed an ample scope and exercise ; learning and science are no unwelcome visitors ; even wit, when properly restricted, is suffered to take its turn. Not even politics (that "apple of discord,") are contraband, provided they neither engross the conversation, nor jar the temper. Though such society delights to dwell principally upon religious topics, especially on *that* which kindled the hearts of the disciples, in their journey to Emmaus, and though its members rarely separate without opening the sacred volume for their mutual edification and refreshment, and without



mingling their praises and supplications at a throne of grace, still, while thus engaged, they do not banish, but increase, and even perpetuate real happiness. In the judgment of those who choose to consider it as too serious, such intercourse is not devoid of interest, and (contradictory as it may appear) is occasionally courted by such persons.

Now the "social character" of Mr. Beachcroft is to be taken in a religious sense. Not that he confined himself to circles where the spirit of Christianity controls every heart, and is more or less perceptible in every remark. Convinced, as he truly was, of the immeasurable evils that result from worldly communications, and deeply as he felt their tendency to dissipate our thoughts, and even to secularize our affections, he *sometimes*, and that on the principle of Christian conciliation, accepted an invitation from those who had not yet manifested a decidedly religious character. He made it, as may easily be supposed, a condition of such intercourse that the conversation should be at least decorous. And where the clergyman is alike serious in profession and in reality, *few* will utter in his ears an indecent or a profane word.

And even the most reckless offenders usually restrain their tongue when, in compliance with the dictates of conscience, he offers them some charitable reproof. In such cases they generally dread a renewal of the counsel, and therefore wisely refrain from a repetition of the offence.

Rarely as Mr. Beachcroft entered into mixed society, and though he never entered it without prayer for the strengthening and preserving influences of the Holy Spirit, still, as he advanced in years, he gradually withdrew from it. Moreover it was his steadfast aim not to gratify himself, but to "impart to his associates some spiritual benefit." His example was of itself an intelligible and impressive lesson. His meekness, humility, courtesy, and uncommon suavity of temper, could scarcely fail to arrest the attention of every one present. In him was alike manifest that charity which is ready to embrace the greatest enemy, and that faith which elevates the thoughts above this evanescent world. It was, therefore, a common observation, "He is unlike other people." Yet those who censured his particularity silently did homage to his piety.

To the force of Christian example Mr.

Beachcroft occasionally added spiritual hints and observations. True to the exquisite maxim of the village priest, he

“Allured to brighter worlds and led the way.”

Such “hints and observations” were connected with the present topic of conversation, and sometimes were naturally suggested by it. Whatever he said on such occasions came so richly perfumed with the sweets of Christian charity, that if it failed to profit, it could seldom seriously offend.

Mr. Beachcroft was once dining with a neighbour, when a lady present discovered that her necklace was broken, and that the pearls, of which it had been composed, were rolling on the floor. A gentleman had no sooner collected them for her, than he pointedly addressed the following observation to the company :—“ This reminds me of the parable of the merchant, who was seeking after pearls, and I never could discover why, for the sake of *one* pearl, he parted with all the rest.” Mr. Beachcroft, not less promptly than charitably, replied, “ Perhaps it has not occurred to you, that *one* pearl is incomparably more precious than all others.” Whatever was the effect of the rejoinder, its re-

ligious point was discovered, and the inquirer dropped the subject. And notwithstanding that sepulchral silence which follows a spiritual observation when submitted to a mixed company ; (insomuch, that Hannah More has somewhere compared it to a foundling that is disowned by every one present ;) it is sometimes objected by the world to persons of professed piety, "Well, we did expect to hear *something religious* from their lips."

But it is time to notice an opinion prevalent in certain quarters, and one that is directly calculated to discredit Mr. Beachcroft as a minister of Jesus Christ. It is this ; that he was sometimes betrayed into a certain degree of conformity to worldly men, and therefore enjoyed so much of their esteem and admiration. Accordingly it has been asked respecting him ? "How is it that Mr. Beachcroft contrived to please *both* parties, the worldly and the religious ?" That the foregoing animadversions and inquiry proceeded from the lips of those who were but superficially acquainted with his religious character might not unfairly be assumed. His vindication, wherever necessary, may be found in that devotional spirit, that love to God and man, that occasional endurance of reproach

for Christ's sake, and above all, in that peace and consolation by which Mr. Beachcroft was distinguished, even in his last illness. A man of such Christian graces could not, without great injustice, be pronounced, in any sense whatever, a man of the world. Moreover, his natural charms of manner, of conversation and of temper, increased, as confessedly they were, by the attractiveness of Christian charity, gained him the regard of those who still rejected and despised his principles. To *know* Mr. Beachcroft and not in some measure to *like* him, was perhaps impossible. Where his Christian graces might offend, his natural endowments could scarcely fail to please. Thus, without sacrificing principle, he powerfully arrested prejudice; and was, therefore, less frequently called on to encounter obloquy and opposition.

If, however, it be asked, "was it not by some apparent conformity to worldly characters; by some undue, yet undesigned stretch of Christian charity in their behalf; or possibly by too great delight in their conversation and society; that Mr. Beachcroft was less reproached by them than are the generality of faithful and devoted ministers?" We reply, in candour, that although Mr. Beachcroft's danger lay to

an unusual extent on the side of compliance with the world, and his natural endowments were his snare, whenever he was placed in its society, yet thus much we confidently affirm ; that even when his *manners* might appear, from their very cheerfulness and kindness, to lend some sort of countenance to worldly men, his *principles* were still diametrically opposed to theirs ; and his supreme *object* was to “ *win souls* ” to the Redeemer. Let those who discover in the deceased the fault now under consideration, remember that “ he was but man ; ” and whilst they mark his infirmities, be sure to imitate his graces. Let them know also, that instead of *enjoying* the society of those who love the world, he once remarked to the author, “ You know not what a poor creature I am whenever I am placed in the society of worldly characters ; my cheerfulness fails ; I then *force* conversation ; and I am out of my element.”

After all, so difficult is the question, “ *how far* may a Christian venture to associate with his irreligious neighbours,” that the wise and pious, when corresponding on this very point, and when expatiating on the danger of intimacy with the men of this world, have left the de-

cision of the matter to the judgment and conscience of the inquirer, after having pressed the necessity of prayer and self-examination by the rules prescribed to us in Scripture. Perhaps the following test may not be altogether useless to us, when retiring from the society in question? "What were my *motives* in joining it? What has been my conduct and conversation in the midst of it? Have my views of Christ been obscured? Has my love to Him waxed cold? Have I confessed Jesus before men? Am I still bent on seeking God in private prayer and meditation; and does my spirit still thirst for Him as the hart thirsteth for the water brooks?" Some one has well remarked with reference to the present point, "If worldly society be *our cross*, it will not seriously injure us;" and why? because in such a case we shall not *court* it, and whenever we may be thrown into it, we shall then watch and pray against its deadly influence.

In justice to the memory of Mr. Beachcroft, we must next notice his intercourse with pious men; since that intercourse might of itself prove *where* his affections and thoughts habitually rested. He could truly say, "I am a companion of them that fear thee;" and "the

excellent are all my delight." When, therefore, the voice of Christian society invited him, he entered it with "a willing mind." There he passed some of his most profitable hours, and reaped as exquisite enjoyment as human fellowship can supply. Of such meetings he wrote and spoke with more than ordinary interest. Nor was "the communion of *saints*" less dear to him because of the transient reproach associated with so high an appellation. Witness the following correspondence.

"Blunham, Jan. 14, 1818.

"MY DEAR — ;

"My heart quite yearns over your separation from us—soon, so soon, to take place. I will not say absence, for that I trust will never be. We must be united, because we have been led by the same merciful hand to the same point of union. Yes, my dear friend, we shall bow before the same throne, until, I trust, we shall meet before it as glorified spirits. The whole of our journey I would leave in the hands of Him who is our friend, our brother, and our advocate. But I would labour a little in His service; and if you and yours, and I and mine, are working for a few years in different com-



partments of the same garden, one pruning, one grafting, one training, another weeding, how delightful will be the close of such a day; how sweet the communing and reasoning together of things which have happened; how doubly interesting to survey the labour past; how exhilarating the Master's voice, 'call the labourers and give them their hire;' how deeply humiliating; and yet how gratifying, to receive a reward purely of *grace*! We shall meet, I trust, on earth often yet, if it pleases Him who sweetens every meeting.

"Most affectionately yours,

"R. P. BEACHCROFT."

To another friend he writes:—

"Blunham, Feb. 22, 1816.

"MY DEAR ———,

"..... May we meet in cheerful piety, and love unfeigned, as long as we are in these little earthly tents, . . . but may the best meeting be when the soul having been renewed on earth, shall be glorified in heaven, and the body always tending to decay on earth, shall rise triumphant from the grave. Thus I wish to live, and at God's appointed time, with the same serenity and a still brighter hope, to die: I call upon you,

as a fellow traveller, to look upwards, to glory in the strength promised and in the covenanted mercies of a gracious God.

“Yours most truly and affectionately,

“R. P. BEACHCROFT.”

To the same, and without a date.

“Alive, I hope, to every thing which concerns the friends I really value, nothing which may be likely to add to their happiness will ever be indifferent to me. Their books, their garden, their worship, their progress in the journey of life, their steps towards endless perfection . . . . all must be interesting. I am such a fanciful spiritualizer that I rarely see one of these animals,\* when I am in a contemplative mood, without thinking of him who once entered Jerusalem, fulfilling prophecy even by riding on an ass.

“What a garden of sweet flowers is the holy book of God! It makes me more and more dainty. The sweets are so pure; the fragrance is so exhilarating; the beauties are so unrivalled, rather let me say so divine, that I have

\* Alluding to an ass which his friend was then about to ride.

less patience every day to read other books. I must write, as I delight to converse, on subjects which time cannot subdue.

“Yours ever sincerely,

“R. P. BEACHCROFT.”

To another friend on his marriage.

“Blunham, June 10, 1822.

“MY DEAR SIR,

“That we wish you and your dear partner happy, in the best and most extensive sense of the word, you will not, I trust, for a moment doubt. May you be partakers of that happiness which commencing in this world, shall last, when all the changes and chances, the hindrances and interruptions, to which we are now subject, shall have passed away. To a *religious* mind there is a double portion of happiness even now . . . . You build your joys on principles which will enliven and refresh, when novelty shall cease, and every attraction save that of a heavenly mind shall have passed away. May you both be blessed in your basket, in your store, in that long catalogue of mercies which a gracious God promises to a willing, faithful and obedient people. We, as Christians, know ex-

perimentally from *whence* willingness and faithfulness and obedience flow.

“ Ever yours most affectionately,

“ R. P. BEACHCROFT.”

To the same :—

“ Blunham, June 11, 1818.

“ MY DEAR FRIEND,

“ I do assure you I take a very lively interest in your present gratifications . . . . I call yours *high* gratifications, because any intercourse with those who are walking in the faith and fear of God, must tend to edification. That which terminates on this side the grave, is so poor and paltry and worthless, that I often sit down and pity such society. May it be your portion and mine, to be more and more closely united to those with whom I trust we shall live through all eternity.

“ Yours affectionately,

“ R. P. BEACHCROFT.”

As a specimen of that Christlan spirit in which Mr. Beachcroft associated with his religious friends, we give the following *impromptu*,

written in the year 1818, at the request of one from whom he was about to part, and who had emphatically said, "*I hope we shall meet again ?*"

" ' Hope that we meet ! '—through Christ that hope is given,

For tho' we part on earth, we meet in heaven.

' Hope that we meet ! '—thy goodness, gracious Lord,  
Leads us to build all hope upon thy word.

' Hope that we meet ! '—yes, we will stand secure,  
For if thy grace support us to endure  
Pain, sorrow, conflict, disappointment, grief,  
Thy presence will administer relief.

' Hope that we meet ! '—let hope take faith and love,  
And ask a blessing from our God above ;  
Thus let us travel, till we reach that home,  
Thus let us supplicate, ' Thy kingdom come. ' "

None but those who were intimately acquainted with Mr. Beachcroft, can correctly estimate the sterling value of his friendship. His hand was ever ready to assist, his mind to counsel, his heart to sympathize, in the happiness or affliction of his friends. The bond by which he was united to them was far, far different from those in which worldly friendships are included ; such as interest, humour, caprice, hospitality,

partnership in literature and genius, and even fellowship in sin and dissipation. These ties are brittle and perishable. But Mr. Beachcroft was united to his friends by the sacred, the indissoluble, bond of Christian love. As Jesus had loved him, so was he impelled by the Lord's example, to love them. Never did his friendship fail. Thus he practically refuted the favourite conclusion of infidelity, that "*friendship*" is not admitted into the Christian code. And as Mr. Beachcroft delighted in his pious, so he grieved and yearned over his worldly, friends; and with all the tact of wisdom and tenderness of love, he endeavoured to promote their transition to a state of piety and peace.

A few more extracts from his correspondence will further exhibit the character of Mr. Beachcroft's friendship.—For instance :—

" Blunham, June 29, 1818.

" MY DEAR ———,

" . . . . . If the air of M—— suits both parents and children, and the same becomes more endeared to you by public and private ties, we shall go on with our rejoicings, until the day when all our little terrestrial churches, some on the hill and some in the valley, shall

be congregated to form one church eternal in the heavens . . . . .

“Yours affectionately,

“R. P. BEACHCROFT.”

Another to an afflicted friend.

“Blunham, Feb. 15, 1821,

“MY DEAR —,

“I lose not a moment in acknowledging your . . . . . sadly painful letter. Painful to the friends of your dear uncle, but yet replete with solid comfort to the sympathizing soul of a believing Christian. Religious principle so totally changes the view which we take of death, that when the flesh with all its appendages says “weep,” the spirit upon the wings of faith bids us “rejoice.” We cannot but feel most acutely for the bereavement of our valuable friend, but that God, who in mercy had united him so closely to his partner upon earth, will, I doubt not, supply all his need, according to the riches which are in Christ Jesus. . . . May He complete his own work in those who yet remain, until we, through the same atoning blood, shall join that blessed company, where there shall be neither sorrow nor sighing, and where all tears shall be wiped from off all faces. . . . .

and, as the first question with me is, *what can I do to lessen the sufferings of my friend?* I hope that in due time this place will be a sort of quiet retreat for him.

“ Your obliged and faithful,

“ R. P. BEACHCROFT.”

To another friend on the death of his brother :

“ When the awful moment arrives, where shall the sinner look but unto Jesus? It often strikes me very forcibly, when I stand by a sick bed and say to myself, ‘ Here is a dying fellow-sinner? how could I afford him comfort, if I did not myself know the love of Christ?’ it passeth knowledge ; and yet I must open, so far as I am able, this great subject in all its freeness and fulness. Your brother’s case teaches us to speak kindly and affectionately, and after bearing long with our friends (and how long did God bear with us !) to say, ‘ *Whosoever* believeth in him shall never perish, but have eternal life.’ . . . . God in rich mercy bless you all !

“ Affectionately yours,

“ R. P. BEACHCROFT.”

To the same :—



“Blunham, Sept. 19, 1816.

“MY DEAR —,

“To add one ray of light to the bewildered soul, to raise the eye of sorrow to our Saviour and our God, to point . . . to the gracious Bestower of all good,—these are, I am not afraid to call them, the joys of my life. . . . There is something peculiarly awful and awakening in the chamber of death. I have stood and meditated until I have seemed almost corrected by a gentle voice, saying, ‘Leave these melancholy scenes. Christ is risen, and is now at the right hand of God—look to Him, meditate on his intercession. Why is He there?—to put up your prayers, and to make them acceptable by the sweet incense of his own merits. Let the dead bury their dead; pay every tribute of grateful respect to the departed; but go thou and preach the kingdom of God.’ . . . The believer looks on death not as he once did. He confesses his power, and must feel his smart; but his sting, his poison, is done away. Yes! blessed be God, he knows the antidote. . . . He can say, ‘My Lord and my God has conquered, and I too shall conquer in His strength.’

“Your ever affectionate friend,

“R. P. BEACHCROFT.”

Such was Mr. Beachcroft as a member of the church militant. Few have been more endeared than himself to "the excellent of the earth;" and few more prepared by grace to join the communion of "saints in glory everlasting."

## CHAPTER XII.

*His public Exertions in support of Religious Institutions.*

WHEN the minister of Christ is found to have been fervent in the sanctuary, diligent in his parish, exemplary in the bosom of his family, devoutly studious in the closet, and a man of charity in all his social communications, it cannot surprise us to be informed that he was a friend to every benevolent and religious institution, to the extent of his leisure, his ability, and his pecuniary resources. The latter, like the former praise, unquestionably belonged to Mr. Beachcroft. He kept in lively recollection those objects of Christian beneficence that abound in this afflicted world—the blind, the deaf, the

corporeally and mentally diseased, the fatherless, the widow, and those also who groan under the iron yoke of slavery. With yet tenderer pity he regarded the millions who walk in Pagan or in Jewish darkness ; together with those nominal Christians around whom the clouds of ignorance gather with a more appalling aspect. Therefore he was a member of those societies which appeared to him most important in their design, and most efficient in their operation ; especially of the venerable “ Society for promoting Christian knowledge ;” “ The Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts ;” “ The British and Foreign Bible Society ;” “ The Jews’ Society ;” “ The Prayer Book and Homily Society ;” “ The Bristol Church of England Tract Society ;” and “ The poor pious Clergy Society ;” &c. &c.

As a conscientious member and minister of the Church of England, he was at all times ready to plead the cause of her elder institutions. He had discrimination to see their excellencies, as well as to detect their faults. Were certain *tracts*, issued by the former Society, objectionable in point of doctrine ?—he selected others that were sound. Was the second Society, in some sense, a partaker of the sin of oppressing the

unhappy negro? \*—he confessed with thankfulness to God the services of those whom it deputed to “preach liberty to the captive, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound.” Mr. Beachcroft moreover actively distributed the publications of the “Religious Tract Society.” Not unknown to him were the interesting anecdote, and the affecting tale, which are so happily made by that Society the vehicle of religious counsel, and which have proved signally instrumental in guiding sinners to the cross. Cordially and constantly he supported those kindred religious institutions, which are labouring, “in Africa and in the East,” for the conversion of the heathen ; at home and abroad, for the recovery of the lost sheep of Israel and Judah ; and in all quarters of the world, for the distribution of the peerless Liturgy of our established church.

Yet Mr. Beachcroft regarded another Christian institution as still more important and beneficial—even “The British and Foreign Bible Society.” So far was he from being entrapped by any specious arguments in its defence, or from inconsiderately yielding to those charms of

\* We allude to the Codrington estate, in the West Indies, still belonging to the Society.

novelty and charity which adorned its front, that he first patiently read the principal pamphlets of the day, both for and against the Society; and then he determined, on conviction, not only to aid it with his subscription, but also to labour in its cause. From that time he became one of its efficient secretaries.

His remarks to a friend, dated "Blunham April 10, 1812," are these:—

"With respect to the Bible Society, I am deeply engaged in its service, being the secretary, on the part of the establishment, of the Bedford Auxiliary. I must think the institution the very best in this kingdom, because its plan is the most simple to attain the greatest good. *I have seen every thing which has been written for and against the Society*, and would recommend you to read 'Dealtry's Vindication;' 'Vansittart's Reply;' his 'Three Letters;' and a passage in 'Hodgson's Life of Bishop Porteus.'\* And, above all, attend the general meeting at Freemason's Hall.

"Yours affectionately,

"R. P. BEACHCROFT."

\* The bishop's words were these:—"The more he considered its object, and the longer experience he had of

Of his work as secretary to the "Bedford Auxiliary Society," Mr. Beachcroft thus wrote:—

"It is a delightful office. I never liked any thing so much as my employment at Bedford."

So in the First Report of that Society, he says,—“The eye of the Christian sparkles with delight, when he finds that to circulate God’s own book, the Bible, larger sums have been collected than for any other purpose whatsoever.” Would that we could *still* aver, what is next affirmed in the Report, namely, that a “*delightful unanimity* pervades every part of this immense fabric. ‘The British and Foreign Bible Society’ is indeed built as a city which is at unity in itself.” Yet, while we respect the *motives* of those who have of late disturbed that “unanimity,” by voting for the exclusion of Socinians from the Society in question, and for

the spirit and principles on which it was conducted, the more deeply he was convinced that it merited all the support which the Church of England could give it. . . . . None of those secret, dark designs, none of those plots and conspiracies to subvert the establishment, which were so confidently predicted by a certain set of men, as the inevitable effect of the Society, have yet been discovered in it. It is, in fact, much better employed,” &c. &c. &c. p. 213, 14, 15.

the introduction of prayer at the commencement of its public meetings, we cannot admit the ground on which such resolutions have been brought forward. We must, however, confine ourselves to the following general remarks; namely, it has never yet been *proved* that to allow Socinians to continue members of the Society, is in any way whatever to countenance their doctrine. Next, by becoming distributors of genuine copies of the Bible, they in fact advocate, not *their* creed, but *ours*. The anniversary meetings of the Society are remarkable for those Trinitarian addresses which maintain the Godhead of the Saviour. As to the supposed necessity of commencing such meetings with *oral prayer*,\* the measure has been shown to involve insuperable difficulties, and at the same time not to be *essential* to the devotional character of the Society—*the meeting not being held for the purpose of public worship*. That character is still sustained by the devout aspirations which appear in its annual reports, and which proceed from the bosom of its advocates, not only in the family and in the closet, but even in the public assembly.

\* Vide a pamphlet on the subject, by "*Serengenarius*."



We turn from these general remarks on behalf of the Society in question, to those manuscripts of Mr. Beachcroft, from which one extract has been already made. We will now venture on another from the same Report, and pray that we may live to see it again justified by fact.

“It was said of wisdom, by the wise king Solomon, and we may say it of this Society, ‘her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace.’ Pleasantness arising from the purest source, the making others happy — ‘peace’ springing from the wide and extensive circulation of the gospel of peace. . . . . The British and Foreign Bible Society, with all her friends and auxiliaries, may remind us of that sacred tree, under the canopy of whose extended foliage the Indian sits sheltered and secure. In the language of the poet, she

‘Spreads her arms

Branching so broad and long, that in the ground

The bending twigs take root; and daughters grow

About the mother tree, a pillared shade

High over-arched.’—*Milton’s Paradise Lost. Book 9.*”

The spirit of *prayer* pervades the conclusion of the Report;—“Your Committee conclude with humbly imploring that strength and assist-

ance from above which alone can enable them to perform any acceptable service to God, or their fellow-Christians. They *pray* that God's word may run and be glorified; that 'his way may be known upon earth, his saving health among all nations.'"

Of the obligation incumbent upon Christians *universally to circulate the Scriptures*, Mr. Beachcroft thus speaks in another Annual Report of the same Auxiliary Society:—"Our mariners have traversed seas, and have reached those high latitudes in which the pole ceases to attract, in which the needle wanders in endless variations, and weeks, and days, and hours, are mingled in one common night. But where shall we find a spot on earth, where sinful man does not need a Saviour, and where that Saviour, as revealed in the Bible, is not equal to supply all his wants, and to *atone* for all his transgressions? Where shall we find that spot from which spiritual darkness may not be dispelled, under God, by the light of Revelation? . . . Our God is everywhere present. Let his written word, therefore, have universal circulation."

Again, on the *benefit resulting from its dis-*

*tribution*, Mr. Beachcroft thus wisely comments in his Tenth Report :—"Nor is it our duty to speculate upon the beneficial results arising from between three and four million copies of the word of God ; we would rather take our stand upon the truth of that word, and look up to Him who gave it, to command a blessing. ' In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thy hand.' Let us do good on the most enlarged principle to the bodies and souls of men, and then a blessing shall not be wanting on our labours."

"The Society," Mr. Beachcroft remarks in another Report, "has *not a spark of rivalry in its composition*. It would rather pray to be an humble instrument in pulling down the strong-holds of sin and error, and in building up the temple of the living God."

"Do not," says Mr. Beachcroft, respecting *the spirit of the institution*, "merely watch the progress of civilization, the diffusion of knowledge, the distribution of the sacred volume, but be yourselves engaged in every labour of love. Think nothing done while any thing remains undone. True charity meets the wants of mankind as Rebekah met the servant of Abra-

ham at the well's mouth. She says, 'Drink of these waters of life;' she hastens to let down the pitcher, and runs again to the well to draw water."

Of the *humility* of Mr. Beachcroft, when labouring on behalf of the Bible Society, the following is a pleasing specimen. Writing to a friend he says:—

" Blunham, Sept. 26, 1829.

" I never did any work for our great and blessed Lord, but I always found more than an abundant recompence in the communion which I humbly trust I had with Him. And this sense of his presence keeps us from any undue presumption on religious engagements. I own I sometimes entertain great fears for those who talk of the 'high and lofty One, who inhabiteth eternity, whose name is holy,' in a way so familiar as to make me shudder. . . . Do you not think that in those religious characters, on whom most dependence is to be placed, you always find the greatest reverence for the name, the day, the book, the providential dealings, of the Lord? They are no longer servants, it is true, but sons, when God puts the Spirit of his Son into their hearts; but a dutiful son has a

constant respect for his father mixed with his love.

“ Your’s affectionately,

“ R. P. BEACHCROFT.”

In another letter to a friend, (May 15, 1817,) Mr. Beachcroft thus beautifully contrasts the present and eternal employments of the true believer :—

“ We had indeed a heavenly week,” (referring to that in which certain religious societies held their annual meetings,) “ and yet how different will heaven be ! Our services will not fatigue us. The glorified body will be a fit companion for its spiritual inmate, the soul. We shall see the Saviour of whom we now speak, and in whom we now believe. *No written word* will then be needed, for his law will be our delight, engraven on our hearts. No missionaries will be wanted, for there will be no heathen to convert, no Jew to Christianize. No ‘Prayer-book,’ for all will be praise. No ‘Homily,’ for we shall be taught of God. No outward temple, for the church shall be triumphant ; and the Lamb shall be the light thereof. Thus, when all these meetings end, I return

home, thankful for the past, but looking, yes, more earnestly than ever, to the future. I see that all things, pleasures, comforts, pains, disappointments, come to an end, but — thy commandment is exceeding broad. I may stretch my desires to heaven, and they will be satisfied. Thus, my dear friend, I preach to myself; and I can assure you that in my own family psalm, and prayer, and chapter, with my poor, dear, sick partner in joy and sorrow, I seemed even nearer to my God, than in all the hurry and bustles of the anniversary meetings in London. Each employment has its place, and each, I feel, receives a blessing.

“ Affectionately yours,

“ R. P. BEACHCROFT.”

Of Mr. Beachcroft's genuine attachment to the British and Foreign Bible Society, and of his devoted labours in its cause,\* a fair conception may be formed from the foregoing documents:—That attachment was as wise as it was ardent; for he invariably kept in view the necessities of the moral world, the millions that are yet destitute of “the light of life,” and the

\* Of which his subsequent appointment as one of its *Life Governors* was a further evidence.

utter impossibility of their being supplied by any one existing institution. But did he forsake the *old* Society as soon as he embraced the *new*? On the contrary, he no sooner gave his name and support to the Bible Society, than he *doubled* his subscription to the "Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge." He was too well convinced of the *scriptural foundation of our church*, to apprehend its overthrow, or even injury, in consequence of its union with dissenters for the distribution of the sacred volume. *Such* an union, he judged, was at once its stability and its ornament. Nor is it a little remarkable, that so judged that venerable prelate,\* than whom no one has been more strenuous or persevering in pleading the cause of the establishment.

But to Mr. Beachcroft the union in question appeared both *safe* on ecclesiastical, and *delightful* upon Christian grounds. Being exempt from that narrowness of mind which would deny, or even underrate the classical and biblical attainments of those who dissent from the establishment, he joyfully anticipated the result

\* Dr. Burgess, the Bishop of Salisbury : vide his Lordship's Charge to the Clergy of St. David's, delivered in 1814 or 1815.

of the united labours of Episcopalians, Presbyterians, Baptists, Independents, Wesleyans, and (though last, not least) the very useful Society of Friends, in the translation and circulation of the Scriptures. In this Christian confederacy, Mr. Beachcroft felt persuaded no other sacrifice was made but that of unchristian prejudices—"prejudices" which had too long formed a wall of separation between those who were still spiritually "one in Christ Jesus."

And those who sat with Mr. Beachcroft in the committee-room, or occasionally travelled with him as fellow-labourers for the Society, will testify that his affection flowed toward his Christian brethren, unchecked, undamped by the inquiry, "To what communion does he belong?" Nor did he ever share with them the spiritual pleasures of an anniversary, without enjoying a foretaste of those higher pleasures that await the assembled followers of the Lamb, and in which there will be no distinction but that which arises from the degree in which we are made partakers of the divine nature.

What were the qualifications of Mr. Beachcroft as an advocate of the Bible Society, it is not difficult to determine. His readiness, his perspicuity, his zeal, his charity, together with



his experience and judgment, are generally confessed by those who have listened to his addresses from the platform. Few speakers, perhaps, have been heard with closer attention and livelier interest than Mr. Beachcroft. Accordingly, he was sought after as one who, though perhaps not strictly eloquent, did more than eloquence alone could effect in support of the Society. Not only was he pressed to speak for it in the university of Cambridge, but he received from Lord Teignmouth and Mr. Wilberforce earnest solicitations to attend an anniversary meeting in Yorkshire; and that because (to borrow the observation of the latter) "it is a case of extreme importance; and having said this," adds Mr. Wilberforce, "I am persuaded I shall have said enough to bring you to consent, if it be not, humanly speaking, out of your power."

To these testimonies may be added one of no unimportant character, from the pen, or rather from the heart, of the Rev. Dr. Steinkopff, who, as a minister of Christ and an advocate of the Bible Society, is dear to thousands of our countrymen, and to none more dear than to the author. Referring to Mr. Beachcroft, (in a letter of Dec. 14, 1830,) he says, "What

particularly attracted my attention was the simplicity and purity of his (Mr. Beachcroft's) mind. Far remote from all ostentation and display, he was desirous, in his public addresses, to direct the attention of his hearers to the infinite value of the word of God, to the vast importance of its universal circulation, and to the blessed effects produced by a sincere belief in its sacred doctrines, and an implicit obedience to its salutary precepts, in the mansion as well as in the cottage. Another feature in his character, which I had often occasion to admire, was his truly catholic spirit. Sincerely and warmly attached as he was to the Church of England, of which he was a real ornament, he did not confine his Christian affection within its limits; but with generous ardour, his enlarged mind embraced ministers and members of other Christian churches and denominations . . . . I was permitted to visit him in his own parish; and I still recollect with what a high sense of the sacredness and importance of the ministerial office his bright example inspired my mind. The motto of our departed friend appeared to be that of John the Baptist: 'He (Christ) must increase, but I must decrease.' Of the genuine esteem and affectionate regard of those who knew him

best in his more immediate sphere of labour, I witnessed an affecting proof *at the anniversary meeting of the Bedford Auxiliary Bible Society in 1829, at which the intelligence of his dangerous illness produced a sensation, and drew forth feelings of Christian sympathy, which have left a deep impression on my mind.*

“ Farewell, my dear friend ; may we be enabled by the Spirit of Christ frequently to remember those who have fought a good fight and finished their course and kept the faith, that stimulated and encouraged by their example, we may follow their faith, ‘considering the end of their conversation.’

“ Yours affectionately,

“ C. F. W. STEINKOPFF.

“ To the Rev. T. A. M.”

We may conclude the chapter by remarking, that having escaped for ever from the din of those unhappy controversies which to this day are scarcely hushed, Mr. Beachcroft can now rejoice in the retrospect of his self-denying labours, and in the prospect of that glorious day when himself and his companions in Christian toil shall hear this gladdening testimony from

the mouth of converted heathens: "Thy word has quickened me;" and this higher testimony from the God and Father of all, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

## CHAPTER XIV.

*His declining Health—Last Illness—Happy composure of Mind—Dying Testimony, and end.*

THE removal of the true Christian from this benighted world, in the midst of his years and his exertions, is among the most inscrutable dispensations of Divine Providence. It defeats our brightest expectations, and disappoints our fondest hopes ; and, however confidently we may argue respecting the ultimate good to be elicited from present evil, and however closely we may associate the spiritual profit of the believer with his temporal afflictions, yea, even while our hearts confess, “ the Lord has done all things well,” the reason of such trials can be but ill understood by man till it shall finally be revealed by God.

An instance of such mysterious appointments appeared in the alarming illness and subsequent decease of Mr. Beachcroft. His health, though not robust, was generally good; and being a man of temperate, and certainly not inactive habits, he seemed to have a fair prospect (not having yet seen his fiftieth birth-day) of preaching in old age that Saviour whom he had exalted in his youth, and in whose service he invariably found increasing pleasantness and peace. Yet "my thoughts are not your thoughts,"\* saith the Lord. Mr. Beachcroft, however, by no means coveted an extension of the span of temporal existence. Here we appeal to the testimony of a friend and dignitary of the church, who in Feb. 1830, addressed Mrs. Beachcroft to the following effect:—

"I shall never forget, many years ago, at —, the reproof Mr. Beachcroft gave me for lamenting the flight of time, and the declension of youthful vigour; as if any approach towards our latter end was an event to be hailed rather with sensible joy, as an approximation to our best hope and final blessedness."

Indeed, as early as the year 1817, Mr. Beachcroft apparently anticipated, and that

\* Isaiah lv. 8.

with the serenity of faith, a somewhat premature decay; for he said to a much-valued friend, "My voice likewise fails me, my chest refuses to bear me out when speaking; and last Monday, . . . . at the Penitentiary meeting, I could hardly articulate. I must not lavish my little strength, but I will write and read, and pray and praise, whilst I have my being. . . . .

"Ever your sincere Friend,

"R. P. BEACHCROFT."

What was the nature of that malady, which attacked Mr. Beachcroft in June 1829, and in what spirit he was enabled to sustain it, may be collected from the following letters, written by himself, when beginning, as he then thought, to regain his wonted health:—

"To the author :

"Blunham, July 15, 1829.

"MY DEAR METHUEN,

"For the last five weeks it has been my lot rather to suffer than to do the will of God, having been upon my bed with a most violent bilious fever. My sight was taken away at first, and my hearing; blood flew to the head, and I was on the verge of eternity. But I bless God

that his Spirit so powerfully applied the riches of Christ to my soul, that I enjoyed peace and great inward comfort. *The Scriptures, committed to memory in the day of health*, were my mental food ; for I was allowed no conversation. My good wife did not go to bed for more than a month, but applied wet cloths to my head night and day. We both had “peace and joy in believing.” Whether I shall ever see perfectly again he who made the eye best knoweth. At present I can read and write but poorly. The good Lord bless your household.

“ Ever yours affectionately,

“ R. P. BEACHCROFT.”

To another Friend :—

“ Blunham, July 14, 1829.

“ MY DEAR FRIEND,

“ I heard of your kind anxiety for me when I was in the midst of my fever. That season of a month was a peaceful and a happy season to me. I fully thought the next paroxysm in my head would remove my spirit into the presence of my Creator ; and an awe, mingled with a momentary panic, came over me. But it was removed as suddenly by such a full display of the riches of Christ, so suitable to all my sins,



negligences and infirmities, as I never could have pictured to myself before I thus needed it. Every doubt or difficulty was met by a text of Scripture. I seemed in a divine armoury, and after . . . . . I had no one uneasy moment. Under a paroxysm of eighteen hours. . . . . I was really happy. My mind was preserved totally free from delirium by God's blessing upon *method*. I set myself subjects—a psalm, the Epistle to the Hebrews, the agony of Christ—and commonly went to sleep *when naming all my friends singly in prayer to God*. *My peace flowed like a river*. The 14th and 15th of St. John were great comforts to me. . . . . I lived by meditation and prayer and praise; for all conversation was forbidden; and my good wife had no helper, night nor day. I can only say, 'Acquaint thyself with God, and be at peace with him.'

“ Ever yours affectionately,

“ R. P. BEACHCROFT.

“ P. S.—My eyes recover slowly.”

Thus early he “glorified God in the day of visitation.” And, though few could hesitate to admit his Christian sincerity, there had never-

theless been long allotted to Mr. Beachcroft, as formerly to the righteous Job, such a share of earthly wealth and temporal prosperity, as might possibly give rise to the supposition that his happiness principally rested on an earthly basis. The general observer might remark, "When a man has so beautiful a residence, possesses so much ability to do good to others, and is exempt from personal afflictions, no wonder that he is a happy being." Doubtless these secular ingredients were sufficiently mingled in his cup. God had dealt bountifully with him. Yet "*linquenda domus*."\* For in August 1829, Mr. Beachcroft was directed by his physician to visit the sea side, in order to try the efficacy of change of air and scenery, more particularly of rest and retirement. Had his happiness been interwoven with the beauties and comforts of his residence, or dependent on the sweets of health, it must now have materially suffered. The heart that is closely bound to temporal enjoyments can scarcely part from them without a hard struggle, and even an agonizing pang. But it was far otherwise with Mr. Beachcroft. He had been taught by his heavenly Father in whatsoever state he was to

\* Or "the house must be forsaken."

be content therein. When, therefore, he was compelled to leave his fair and favourite abode, he made no hesitation, and manifested no regret. Though about also to part from his venerable mother, (whom he was never again permitted to behold in this world,) this "son of Abraham," in the true spirit of a pilgrim who is seeking "a heavenly country," turned his back on Blunham.

Early in the month of August Mr. Beachcroft arrived at Ramsgate, in the hope of deriving on its shores great advantage to his health, and of ultimately returning to his flock with renewed strength and vigour. Such, in Christian submission to the will of God, was the object of his earnest supplications. For even then he was occupied with preparation for the Blunham pulpit. The sermons (in notes) then written by him may prove how zealously he was bent on turning his bodily afflictions to the spiritual welfare of his flock. We subjoin extracts from the notes.

"St. Luke xvii. 15, 16 — 'And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God, and fell down at his feet, giving him thanks ; and he was a Samaritan.'

“ It is not for us, as ministers of the gospel of Jesus Christ, to speak of ourselves but with the deepest humility of mind. But this subject leads to *much self-examination and self-devotion on my part*. You have all probably had some recovery, some special interference of Providence in your lives. Are you, *are we*, let me say, like *the one restored Samaritan*, or like the nine thankless Jews? You boast your privileges, perhaps your knowledge, your health, your nearness to God: but remember that the leprosy of sin cleaves to every one of us. To receive a cure we must humbly approach the Saviour—‘ Jesus, Master, have mercy on us.’ How simple is the prayer; how speedy is the answer! As they went to the priest they were healed. To the humble Christian what a privilege is every mean of grace! *In trouble he prays; in joy he sings*: here you find him at the mercy-seat. Does Satan tempt?—he flees to the horns of the altar. Does the world try him?—he knows where victory is to be obtained. Does his own heart join in league with these enemies?—still he seeks help from above. He falls down on his face at the feet of Christ, giving Him thanks.

“ Lastly, *what should be our conduct on receiving a benefit?* Praise in public and private;

seeking to *know our duty better and to do it better ; watching every opportunity to serve God or our neighbour.* And let me add, *from past experience, that faith in Christ and an humble endeavour to serve Christ, can make the bed of sickness as happy and as peaceful as the best day of health. It is no ordinary privilege to meditate upon these things, when the world is shut out and the curtain drawn. Then to look up to God as a reconciled God ; then to see the fulness and suitableness of Jesus Christ ; then to be willing to live or die. . . . .*

“ Believe me there is not a moment of time to lose. You may be called suddenly, in a moment. The whole head may be sick, the whole heart faint. To have to begin the work *then . . . . .* is indeed a sad melancholy task, when even our worldly concerns are a burden. ‘ Now, then, is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation.’ . . . . *a step only divides time from eternity . . . .* Live so daily prepared that no event shall be sudden. A constant state of prayer, meditation and self-dedication, will, through Christ, effect this desirable end. God grant that we may, through our great forerunner, enter into a state of endless praise and joy and blessedness.”

Again, in the season of sickness, and in the

view of eternity, Mr. Beachcroft thus expresses himself in notes (intended for the Blunham pulpit) upon a *Psalm*.\* “‘There is an eye of mercy that watches over us.’ ‘Commit thy way unto the Lord and He shall bring it to pass.’ ‘Not a sparrow falls, &c.’ There is moreover some wise reason for the various appointments of God, which we see not, nor would it be well for us to see. We must believe and trust and rely upon that hand which guided the patriarchs, and prophets, and will assuredly guide us safe to the land of promise. ‘What thou knowest not know, thou shalt know hereafter.’ Be not faithless, but believing. Wherefore, then, should we fear, though the earth be moved. Why art thou cast down, O my soul? Put thy trust in God; for I will yet fear him.”

“And,” (says Mr. Beachcroft in his notes on Psalm lxxi. 22, written about the same period,) “thou hast showed me great and sore troubles, and shalt bring me up again from the depths of the earth. Again permitted to preach, (such, it seems, was his expectation.) The wisdom and mercy of God in exhorting us to prepare.... Five virgins.—We close our eyes and ears.—The Lord comes.—Now *where is the oil in the vessel?* ..... In my sickness, scripture was every

\* The number and verse are not mentioned.

thing.—Psalms &c. &c.—The mind calm and safe. . . the fulness of Christ . . . *In health there must be no compromise with sin.*—Be ye also ready.—Watch!—What are your desires and pursuits?—Faith in Christ.—The church in heaven : no depths of sorrow, or sin, there ?”

Where was his *treasure* and his *heart*, may also be determined by the following “ address,” written from his sick room.

“ Ramsgate, 1829.

“ MY DEAR PARISHIONERS,

“ I am very anxious to address a word of kind exhortation to you, if I am not permitted to speak to you again in this world. I have ministered to you the doctrines of Christianity for four and twenty years, and I earnestly desire and pray you to stand fast in the faith of the gospel of Christ, not forgetting the assembling of yourselves together in the house of God on the Sabbath Day, devoting the whole of the Lord’s Day to his service ; bearing in mind the words of God himself, ‘ Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy.’

“ Be stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord ; forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord. Be at peace one with another.

"I beg you to thank God on my behalf; to intercede for me in the name of Jesus Christ that I faint not in tribulation; but that the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, may enable me to submit my will to His will, and to be still, and know that He is God.

"Fare ye well—Amen!"

To his venerable mother, Mr. Beachcroft wrote in this filial, this Christian strain.

"Ramsgate, Aug. 17, 1829.

"MY DEAR MOTHER,

"My mind runs back to old times, and but for good hopes and clear views of *God's promises* for the future, I should be tempted to sink a little in spirits. All the inns reminded me of our cavalcade forty years ago to Broadstairs. *Then* it was spring, the early spring, with me. One of that party is, I doubt not, *waiting for us*. May we follow on . . . . I humbly hope we shall meet again, when the last journey shall be ended. Nor do I forget this place and its associations twenty-six summers ago. Then it was summer, the beginning of summer with me. Now it is the middle of autumn. I have had a shaking of the leaves; and I would so live day by day, even if I have no



large portion of future health, as to be leaping and bounding over time, and reaching (when and how God best knows) a blessed immortality. Then the different stages of the journey will be but as *specks*, of consequence indeed, because they must be accounted for; but made safe by *his journey, who went before us*, and had *not many of our daily comforts*. Let our prayers and praises now meet continually before the throne of grace; for God will hear them and, I believe, has heard them throughout the whole of our journey.

“ Ever affectionately yours,

“ R. P. BEACHCROFT.”

The spirit of waiting faith, and effectual fervent prayer, is also apparent in a letter, which he then wrote to a friend.

“ Ramsgate, Sept. 12, 1829.

“ MY DEAR FRIEND,

“..... You kindly ask after my present state, and I honestly say, that I think it is to mortal eye very precarious. But we walk by faith, not by sight. I believe, if I know my own heart at all, that I can leave my case in the hands of the great Physician of soul and body.

I may be restored to partial health, or I may be taken away suddenly. I therefore, without the least diminution of my cheerfulness, or a gloom being cast over my daily employments and duties, look upon each day as possibly my last day. If years be added to my life, I earnestly wish to take some portion of ministerial work. At any rate, if I be not able to resume my active habits, speaking and preaching and visiting the sick, yet I hope to subscribe to *societies*, to be present and privately to counsel my friends; in short, to be on the Lord's side in all labours of a devotional or charitable tendency. But I can reason from the past to the future. The hand of the Lord has been manifested in mercy. When at the point of death, as I fully expected, Jesus Christ was indeed precious to my soul . . . . I had a *momentary* pang at leaving as I thought . . . . but I had such stores of scripture comfort dealt out as it were to me like the manna, as I cannot describe . . . . I used to think that I knew every verse in the Bible, in which the word *peace* is to be found. It should be known, and I have told it and written it to many young friends, *that the art of repeating large passages of Scripture preserved me from delirium. Had the mind wan-*

*dered it must have gone.* I heard of others dying raving mad, seized just as I had been. I found myself just as the clay in the hands of the potter ; I believed, that whether I lived or died, I was in the Lord's safe keeping.

“ Ever yours affectionately,

“ R. P. BEACHCROFT.”

In September 1829, Mr. Beachcroft was permitted by his physicians to leave Ramsgate. When near the city of Canterbury, it pleased his heavenly Father to inflict another stroke upon his “ outer man.” He was suddenly deprived of the use of his right side. On his arrival at the Fountain Inn, he was promptly attended by a physician, and by means of profuse bleeding his disorder was in some degree alleviated. Still it was painfully manifest to all around him, that the springs of life were now as low as possible. And notwithstanding some very kind friends, who themselves resided in Canterbury, visited him with all the speed, and all the tenderness of sympathy, his situation to one so enfeebled and worn down by illness was in truth a trying one. His mind also was disabled by his apoplectic seizure. To aggravate his distress, his aged mother was as incapable of

visiting him at Canterbury as he was of reaching Blunham, the place of her abode. The tender and indefatigable attentions of the partner of his days were then a blessed means of support and consolation. When he was attempting to call to mind some passage in the Bible, she would seasonably assist him, and thus, as it were, press the honeycomb which he was apparently too weak to reach.

His faith seemed to increase with his bodily and mental trials; so graciously did the Lord deal with him. During the *three months* that he passed at Canterbury he impressed all who attended him with a sense of his extraordinary attainments as a Christian man. And, even though he talked *incoherently* on *other* topics, he could still *speak collectedly on such as were religious*. His soul appeared to cling with unwonted pertinacity to the dearest subject of her meditations. It seemed that nothing was permitted to separate his thoughts from Christ; or, (as a lady well remarked on the occasion,) "though lost to every thing around him, he was not lost to his God."

As the last hope of his recovery, Mr. Beachcroft was, by medical advice, removed to Bath, in October 1829. The God of Jacob was still

evidently with him, to enrich him with patience and with peace, and to enable him to look to Jesus with a growing and realizing faith. The consolations which he had so often been privileged to convey to others, now flowed to himself "from the throne of God and of the Lamb."

On his reaching Bath such means as medical skill and incessant kindness could devise were perseveringly resorted to: yet no ground was gained by the uncomplaining sufferer. Week after week, and month after month, elapsed without affording to his friends any solid hope of his recovery. He was generally confined to a sofa, being so disabled by his attack as to be incapable of walking across the room without the help of crutches. In that state the author occasionally saw him. But, as the circumstances relating to his illness and approaching end are too ample to be included in the present chapter, they may more properly appear in the succeeding.

## CHAPTER XIV.

*Subject continued.*

THE author hopes ever to retain, in fond and profitable remembrance, the Christian lessons which he received when visiting his afflicted friend. Distressing as was the contrast between his present and his past circumstances, and strict as was the order of the physician, that no one should converse with Mr. Beachcroft for more than ten minutes at a time, still it was, on the whole, a privileged and a gratifying visit. His speech was still articulate, and his mind collected; and notwithstanding that feebleness of the latter which was the inevitable effect of his disorder, he still entered with interest, and also with some degree of animation, on the subject nearest to his heart. He spoke of the merciful design of his heavenly Father in correcting him; of the peace that abounded to him in

Christ; of the assaults occasionally made on him by his great adversary, and of the instant succour vouchsafed by his merciful Redeemer. Next Mr. Beachcroft shortly but beautifully touched upon the benefits of prayer; observing, *that he never failed to remember his friends at a Throne of Grace; and that he hoped they would in like manner especially remember him.* Utterly vain were the attempt to convey an adequate idea of his prevailing spirituality of mind. It was evidently superior to his trials, and immediately proceeded from his God. No earthly scene could more exquisitely show the import of the patriarchal sentiment, "underneath are the everlasting arms;" and scarcely could this lower world afford a brighter demonstration of the presence of "*the Prince of Peace.*"

The winter passed away without any material change in the symptoms of Mr. Beachcroft's malady. The unrelieved feebleness of his side too clearly proved the continued languor of the brain. Of this he was so well aware, that with reference to it he said, "So severely has my head been afflicted, that the wonder is I have any understanding left." As the spring advanced, the heat became too oppressive to admit of his continuing at Bath. Accordingly he was

recommended by his physician to repair to Clifton, near Bristol, in order to try the effect of its pure and invigorating air.

Before we speak more particularly of his change of residence, we will present the reader with some further and more touching evidences of the Christian character of Mr. Beachcroft.

*Extracts from Letters to his Mother.*

“ Bath, Dec. 5, 1829.

“ MY DEAR MOTHER,

“ I wish you joy and every blessing on your *eightieth* year. My God, our God, the God of the patriarchs, be with you ! I must not write more.\*

“ Yours affectionately,

“ R. P. BEACHCROFT.”

“ Bath, Dec. 25, 1829.

“ MY DEAR MOTHER,

“ I cannot help wishing you and yours every blessing and real comfort on this holy day. May He, who was born as on this day, be our SAVIOUR in the fullest sense, and we must be happy now and for ever.

“ Yours affectionately,

“ R. P. BEACHCROFT.”

\* He was in fact incapable of doing so.



" Bath, Jan. 13, 1830.

" MY DEAR MOTHER,

" All hands must be cold this weather, I think, whether at Blunham or at Bath; but when the heart is warm with affection to those we love, above all to God who has blessed and redeemed us, all must be cheerfully alive. One of my oldest, and I believe one of my sincerest friends is gone—I hope to her rest—the dowager Lady ——. May we be better fitted every day by grace for endless glory. The sun shall never go down, and the stream of blessedness shall swell yet more and more.

" Ever yours affectionately,

" R. P. BEACHCROFT."

" Bath, Jan. 27, 1830.

" MY VERY DEAR MOTHER,

" I thank God for your amendment. My prayers daily, and many times night and day, are offered up to a throne of grace for you. My dear good wife takes indeed an active part for our comfort. She is a host; and Mary is very kind indeed. I quite enjoy her letters. I thank God I am a little stronger; but I vary much this cold weather. *Indeed my mind and body are kept in perfect peace.* Every day I

commit the whole of this sickness to the great Physician of soul and body. May God increase your faith and mine, and teach us very humbly to depend and trust his mercy, which endureth for ever.

“ Ever yours affectionately,

“ R. P. BEACHCROFT.”

“ Bath, Feb. 5, 1830.

“ MY VERY DEAR MOTHER,

“ Your little letter was delightful to me ; for it spake of that inward peace which the world can neither give nor take away. The peace of God, my dear mother, will ever be yours. This is the evening sunshine. This is a glow of joy and delight, never to be lost, and it never will. My dear wife cheers me by reading portions of the Bible every day. We take sweet counsel together. *You* are never out of the party ; always with us ; and we shall, in God’s good time, *all* be together. Remember the *twenty-third psalm*—I love to meditate upon it. I love that verse in *Hebrews*, likewise, to meditate upon—‘ *Jesus Christ the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.*’ I am better, certainly, thank God, than last week.

“ Most affectionately yours,

“ R. P. BEACHCROFT.”

"Bath, Feb. 15, 1830.

"MY DEAR MOTHER,

"A letter is going to Mary from my dear wife, who is, I thank God, very much recovered. Indeed I had a very anxious week; but it has pleased God to hear and to answer our prayers. You likewise, my dear mother, are, I trust, very tolerably well. Your letter was just as I should wish to write at *eighty*, or indeed at my age, for it breathed contentment, peace, unshaken faith, and a good hope, which will never suffer you to be made ashamed. And so let us travel onwards. The journey is coming nearer and nearer to its end. '*Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith.*' The good Lord and Master still be with us. Even to 'hoary hairs,' says he, 'I am with you.' I will pray, may God abundantly bless you, and all our dear friends and relations. Do not forget, and may I never forget, the hourly providence of God.

"Ever yours affectionately,

"R. P. BEACHCROFT."

"Bath, April 14, 1830.

"MY DEAR MOTHER,

"I must send you one grateful line of affection upon my birth-day; that is to reach you

on the 17th, when I enter my *fiftieth* year.  
God be gracious in time and through eternity.

“ Ever affectionately yours,

“ R. P. BEACHCROFT.”

“ Bath, April 30, 1830.

“ MY DEAR MOTHER,

“ I write you one line of affectionate regard  
on this my dear *Maria's* birth-day. May every  
blessing be hers ! What she is to me in this  
season of trial, I cannot say. May a gracious  
God repay her an hundred fold ; and may we  
dwell together for ever in his presence ! Every  
blessing be yours likewise, my dear mother,

“ Yours affectionately,

“ R. P. BEACHCROFT.”

In June (1830) Mr. Beachcroft addressed  
the children of his village school in the follow-  
ing affectionate note :

“ *To the Blunham Schools.*

“ June 9, 1830.

“ MY DEAR CHILDREN,

“ I am anxious on your feast-day to wish you  
every blessing. May a good and gracious God

be your portion ! My dear children, love one another, serve your heavenly Father. I am very weak indeed ; but I hope to meet you in the kingdom of heaven. *I should be nothing now without the love of God to sinners in Christ Jesus.* I do not forget one of you, and pray that you may be the children of God through faith in Jesus Christ. And now farewell. Be steadfast ; be kindly affectioned ; live in peace ; and the God of peace shall be with you. *My love to every one, young and old, in the parish.*

“ R. P. BEACHCROFT.”

For a time his reduced frame in some degree revived. He *enjoyed* the healthful breezes of the Clifton downs. Nevertheless he had even then such fresh seizures in his head as forbade all reasonable hope of his eventual recovery. Mr. Beachcroft's friends were apprized of the extreme precariousness of his life, and led to expect his dissolution, if not from day to day, yet assuredly from month to month. Again the author saw him. His appearance was considerably more morbid than during his residence at Bath. Paleness, emaciation, languor, now marked his countenance, and spasmodic pains occasionally oppressed his frame. His mental powers had

also evidently decreased. He spoke indeed collectedly, but with the slowness of one who apprehends that the chain of his ideas may suddenly be snapped asunder.

His words (treasured up by the author in the depths of memory) were these—"God is so gracious to me even now, that I am not permitted to entertain a single doubt of my salvation. I come, as a sinner, to Christ; but I find in Him a present and all-sufficient Saviour." This he said with a tranquillity which may well remind us of the exquisite lines of Sir Walter Scott—

"Some feelings are to mortals given  
With less of earth in them than heaven!"

Never did the Christian sunset appear more cloudless and inspiring. Never did the Redeemer's love more manifestly sustain a spirit burdened with a decaying body.

To that mighty cause might be ascribed his exemption from that irritability of temper which almost invariably attends the victims of palsy and apoplexy. From that subtle connexion which subsists between the mind and the organization, the power of spiritual resistance seems to be proportionably impaired, and the infirmities of the sufferer assume the most pitiable

shape. Though they furnish no excuse for the fretfulness or fury of the patient, who lives without prayer for the succour of the Holy Spirit, still by his succour only can such infirmities be strengthened. How large, then, must the effusion of his grace have proved in the case before us; and how beautiful the illustration of the text,\* “As thy *days*, so shall thy *strength* be!”

Mr. Beachcroft also remarked, with his own tenderness and suavity, to his memorialist—“Just before you entered the room, I had been particularly remembering yourself, your wife, and children, before the throne of grace; oh! it is a blessed thing to pray to God for one another.” That interview was as short as it was thrilling. Its memory commands a tear which is dried by the contemplation of the state where saints shall “weep no more.” Yet nature pertinaciously suggests, “this was the very last time when the author was permitted to see his invaluable friend and brother.” Again, that is in October, he called on Mr. Beachcroft, but received the heart-chilling communication, (such it was to one whose place of abode was at a considerable distance from Clifton,) that “the

\* Deut. xxxiii. 25.

physician had just left him, and that he must see no visitor whatever for the remainder of the day." That moment shed a fresh light on the import of the solemn exhortation, "Cease ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils."

In the course of a short time, or early in November 1830, that letter reached the author which was no sooner opened than he "sought where to weep." It told him his friend "was no more." The intelligence, though far from unexpected, and though allayed by the divine assurance that he was now *present with his Saviour*, was nevertheless that heavy blow from which the feelings of nature do not immediately recover. Such communications prove to us how weak is man, and how entirely he depends for consolation on the grace and mercy of his God.

To give a more circumstantial account of the last days of Mr. Beachcroft, it was said by one who was an eye-witness of his last seizure— "At one to-day\* he had a paralytic stroke on the left side. He called me to him and said, 'I shall soon be gone; I have no righteousness to plead but that of my blessed Redeemer. I have no wishes. Remember my friends; take

\* Early in November 1830.



care of my dear mother ;' spoke of my dear sister and his boys, *i. e.* his nephews. ' I am at peace with God,' said he, ' and at peace with all the world ;'—said no more, and at eleven 'fell on sleep ;' and lies now smiling upon all around ; an evident token of the power of that peace which passeth all understanding."

Another correspondent writes to the following effect :—

" Windsor Terrace, Clifton, Dec. 6, 1830.

" MY DEAR FRIEND,

" The last words we heard dear Mr. Beachcroft utter, two days before his death, when he was apparently as well as usual, were, (after taking my hand with much friendly warmth, his countenance being illumined with a sweet smile,) ' I am glad I have met you, as I long to bear to all my friends my testimony to the faithfulness and loving-kindness of my Saviour, and his tender dealings towards me. He has filled my mind with such joy and peace ! I am reading a sweet book dear M——n recommended to me. I cannot read more than ten minutes at once, or more than a chapter of the Scriptures at a time ; but then *it is quite a*

*feast to me for the rest of the day.* When the disease attacks the other side I am gone; but I must wait God's time. We must not be impatient.' These words were uttered with peculiar sweetness and emphasis.

"Yours affectionately,  
"——."

We next insert the testimony of his pious widow.

"Clifton, Nov. 1830.

"MY DEAR FRIEND,

" . . . . . I saw to-day, when contemplating the last year and a half of the life of my dear husband, more of the fulness of the gospel invitation than I have ever done. 'Come unto me, &c.' When I think that there was not one *earthly* enjoyment left him; bereft of health, shut out from the church, in which it was his glory to preach salvation through Jesus Christ; absent from his dear mother, not willingly, but of necessity; unequal to the joys of study; incapacitated for making known his affection for his friends by writing; incapable of conversation from weakness—nothing left but to look to God for that rest which he had promised; always at peace, rejoicing in tribulation,

full of good works, (for only an hour before he died he sent to Miss R—— a donation for the Newfoundland schools;) alive to every want in his parish; prepared all the Christmas clothing for the poor—prizes for the school children—all sent down in readiness; and in the midst of all this, a constant sufferer in his body. His words were, ‘Tell me what you wish, and I am ready to take, or suffer, what you think right.’ When powerfully assaulted by the devil, and so weak through sickness, that it would seem the arrows of persecution pierced his soul, *I had only to speak of his SAVIOUR*, and he was happy. What a blessing that I could lift up the cross for him to look to. My dear friends, if we did but know what God is, as a present help, what a SAVIOUR is, who has taken away the sting of death, could we let a child ‘perish for lack of knowledge?’ . . . . I believe none of you were forgotten by him at a throne of grace daily; and if departed friends are made ministers of good to those on earth, may he still be made that to us!

“ Yours affectionately,

“ M. B.”

From the suddenness of his last seizure, and

the short space subsequently allotted to him in this world, much was lost to those who from time to time were admitted into the sick chamber of Mr. Beachcroft. Had he lingered day by day, and been permitted to retain the powers of his enlightened mind, doubtless his pallid lips would have dropped, as the honey-comb, some wise and precious sayings. Much could he have spoken from his own recent experience, of the astonishing efficacy of grace, and the sustaining hope of glory. The exhortations of the dying saint might have gone home to many a bosom; and though unusually "weak" in himself, he might have been signally "strong" in Christ, to bring low some proud, or to support some weak spirit, by touching allusions to his cross. Mr. Beachcroft might also have sent such messages to his relatives and friends and flock, as might have proved to them "a sweet savour" of redeeming love. Yet enough he said to testify his own security in Christ, and to encourage others to "taste and see that he is gracious."

A single contemplation of the blessedness of departed saints may reconcile the friends, and also the flock, of Mr. Beachcroft to their severe loss; the loss of his wise counsel, his tender

sympathy, his Christian example. That he, though dissolved in body, is spiritually "present with the Lord," should prove a well-spring of consolation to their drooping spirits. And whatever blessings were conveyed to them by his faithful ministry, still let them delight to meditate, "*the fountain of living waters*" does not and cannot fail. Omnipotence is never at a loss for instruments to glorify his name in the support and the salvation of his people. Let a Martyn or a Heber die, Jesus Christ lives, and is alive for evermore. *He* is "with you always."

Here the reader may reflect how different is the departure of the *true* Christian from that of the enemies of Christ. The *unbeliever*, like the wretched Paine,\* may make a philosophical parade even in his last moments. But the despiser of the Cross is not the possessor of peace; and least of all, when eternity is perhaps as near as it is awful. Not a ray of consolation beams upon him from all his cherished theories and idolized conclusions. Follow, then, the true believer and the infidel to his dying couch, and

\* See "Life of Paine," by John Scandret Harford, Esq. an interesting and instructive narrative.

honestly determine for yourselves, my *younger* readers, which is the votary of truth, which is the benefactor of mankind?

To the *profligate* the thought of dying is like that of plunging down a precipice. Yet even he might have learned from the last looks and accents of the Christian minister to come with a broken spirit to that Saviour who can make it whole.

*The worldling* might also have profited by that scene to which we have referred. It is not in *his* principles to cheer him on the bed of death, or to pour the radiance of hope adown the dark and dreaded valley. Yet by witnessing "the last end" of one who overcame the world by faith in Jesus, the lover of wealth, of pleasure, of pomps and vanities, might have been led to "count them but as dung that he might win Christ."

The *pharisee* might have learned in the chamber of the dying Christian to abandon the presumption of self-confidence for the humility of faith. "It will be too late to cry for *mercy*\* when it is the time of justice;" and to discover our sins, and depravity, and helplessness, when the offer of free deliverance from the

\* Commination Service.

guilt and the dominion of sin shall never again be made us by a rejected SAVIOUR. A calm as transient as delusive is all that self-righteousness can bestow. Abandon, then, the foundation of sand, and thus you may die, like a Beachcroft, rejoicing in the rock of ages: like him, possess the *form* and also the *vitalities* of "orthodoxy," and your end may yet be blessed.

## CHAPTER XV.

*His Funeral—Unanimous marks of respect for his memory—Monumental Tablet and Epitaph written by himself—Summary of his character—A short elegy—Concluding remarks.*

NOTWITHSTANDING the decease of Mr. Beachcroft occurred at *Clifton*, it was the wish of his venerable mother that his mortal remains should be deposited in the church at *Blunham*. As, therefore, he had left no directions respecting the place of his interment, and probably because it was to himself a matter of secondary moment, to that village he was removed. Here it may be proper to remark, that unless peculiar and pressing circumstances forbid it, the grave of a Christian should be opened wherever he may breathe his last. By this arrangement much unnecessary expense is saved to his surviving



friends. The conveyance of the dead in hearses is to those who have made no trial of it inconceivably expensive. By avoiding so heavy an expenditure a large amount might be saved for the purposes of liberality and charity.

In recording the funeral of the beloved rector of Blunham, we may notice the rank and respectability of its numerous attendants. The friend of his boyhood, Lord Grantham, joined the mournful procession from Bedford to Blunham; a procession consisting of not a few of the neighbouring gentlemen and clergymen. The other friends of Mr. Beachcroft (excepting the author who was *compelled* to be absent by the disturbances and fires, then prevailing in his neighbourhood) testified their affection by their presence, and consecrated his memory with their tears.

“There never was,” says one of the attendants, in a letter to the author, “a ceremonial of the kind, in which the mourners were so truly those of the *heart* and not of the *mere garment*. There seemed to be a general sense of some vacuum having been made in each individual’s affections which he despaired of altogether supplying. In his *parish* too what a deprivation! Blessed, as well with the means

as the inclination, to 'go about doing good,' with so much warmth, yet so great judgment, so agreeable and yet so instructive, . . . . *they will have much to answer for who have been favoured with his pastoral care for twenty four years.*

" Ever yours, &c.

" \_\_\_\_\_."

*A Letter from another friend who was present  
at Mr. Beachcroft's Funeral.*

" Dec. 2, 1830.

" MY DEAR FRIEND,

" When we arrived at Burford,\* numbers of the villagers from that parish joined in the procession, and had depicted on their sorrowful countenances that unbought tribute of affectionate regard which only faithfulness such as his could have inspired. When we reached the bridge, which I conclude to be the boundary of the parish of Blunham, numbers of poor people were waiting there, all the men having crape hat-bands, and all the women something, amid the poorest attire, to denote outward mourning,

\* A village about two or three miles distant from Blunham.

. . . . . If I were to form a judgment, I should say that two hundred at the least composed the mournful group. We did not pass a cottage, nor a turn in the road, where there were not poor women testifying by their tears, . . . . how dear to them had been the faithful pastor, from whose lips they had first learned the truths of the everlasting gospel, and who had gently and affectionately led them to Him who is the way, the truth, and the life . . . . And when all that remained of their minister was lowered into its narrow mansion, the sobs and tears of those who stood round, from the peer to the peasant, were mingled in one affecting and heart-felt testimony. But your chief consolation is, that *his record* is on high ; that, having passed this comparatively dreary wilderness, he is come to Mount Zion, the city of the living God, and has joined that innumerable company out of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, whose names are written in heaven.

“ Yours, my dear Friend,

“ Faithfully and affectionately,

“ \_\_\_\_\_.

“ To Mrs. B\_\_\_\_\_”

*A Letter from a clergyman who frequently visited Mr. Beachcroft during his residence at Clifton.*

“ Clifton, Nov. 26, 1830.

“ MY DEAR SIR,

“ The impressions Mr. Beachcroft uniformly left on me, were these ;—how simple and strong was his faith ; how abundant his peace, evidently flowing from such a faith ; and how full was his heart of gratitude to God, and love to his fellow creatures ! I do not know that I ever witnessed these graces so unmingled and so abiding. He told me that for many months past he had been hourly expecting his summons, but that God had mercifully kept him without dread, and with an unshaken reliance on that atoning blood the efficacy of which it had been his privilege for so many years to proclaim to others.

“ Yours very faithfully,

“ ———.

“ To Rev. T. A. M.”

The Rev. Mr. Mendham, then curate of Blunham, bore a similar testimony to the affection of its inhabitants to their departed minister.

“ Nov. 1830.

“ During our last Sunday morning service, many an eye was filled with tears, as various parts of that service seemed to bring Mr. Beachcroft again to their minds. Thus in the first Lesson, which was the 11th chapter of Proverbs, the 4th, 6th, 8th, 20th, 23d, 30th verses, seemed very applicable. And just before the Litany, when I had used to desire the prayers of the congregation, I made a short pause to signify that their prayers were now no longer needed. It seemed to create a general sensation. Few whom I have yet seen can speak of his departure without tears.”

His attendant physician remarked, on hearing of his death, “ Mr. Beachcroft had the simplicity and cheerfulness of a child, and the true piety of a Christian. These and all the endearing qualities which compel esteem must live in recollection while recollection lasts.”

Nor must the homely testimony of his parish clerk be here entirely omitted.

“ Blunham, Nov. 28, 1830.

“ HON. MADAM,

“ With a lamenting heart, I feel it my duty to write to you, to thank you for your extreme

kindness to us all. We are all very much affected by the loss of such a kind and dutiful minister. Such a scene I never witnessed before. For greater respect never could be shown both by friends and neighbours. It was affecting beyond description ; and he is ever to be lamented by all who knew the value of so sincere a friend. Myself and family have every reason to feel the loss of so affectionate a friend. My poor mother considered herself not destitute while you were situate with us. The loss of my poor father and minister, too, who spent so many years so happily together ! We trust that it was not only on earth, but will continue in heaven. If so, their joy is incomparable with our loss. . . . . Myself never witnessed such a Sabbath as this has been ; for the church was crowded with people, and in general, *not a face without a tear.*

“ From your most humble servant,

“ HENRY CLARKE.”

That Mr. Beachcroft was not unworthy of the tears that dropped upon his grave is yet further evident from the following sympathetic letter, written by a quondam curate.

“ Nov. 18, 1830.

“ MY DEAR MADAM,

“ . . . . . I hope I may be allowed to give expression to my feelings of sorrow. What I owe to the example and to the instructions of Mr. Beachcroft I can never possibly express. But I trust I can, with all sincerity, assert that the time which has elapsed since I left Blunham has not in the least diminished my sense of the value of the benefits I derived from commencing my duties as a clergyman under his superintendence. I look back with terror to the inexperience and self-confidence which are too commonly found in young men leaving college; and the retrospect fills me with gratitude to God, and with respect, of which no words can convey an adequate idea, for that kind instructor, whose admonitions were distinguished by a gentleness of manner *quite his own*, and whose advice always carried with it a conviction of its reasonableness and of its intrinsic value. Therefore I do think I am qualified to feel what a loss is sustained by society, by the church, by the parish, . . . through his removal. It was to be expected that the lovely tranquillity which so distinguished him through life would not be interrupted in

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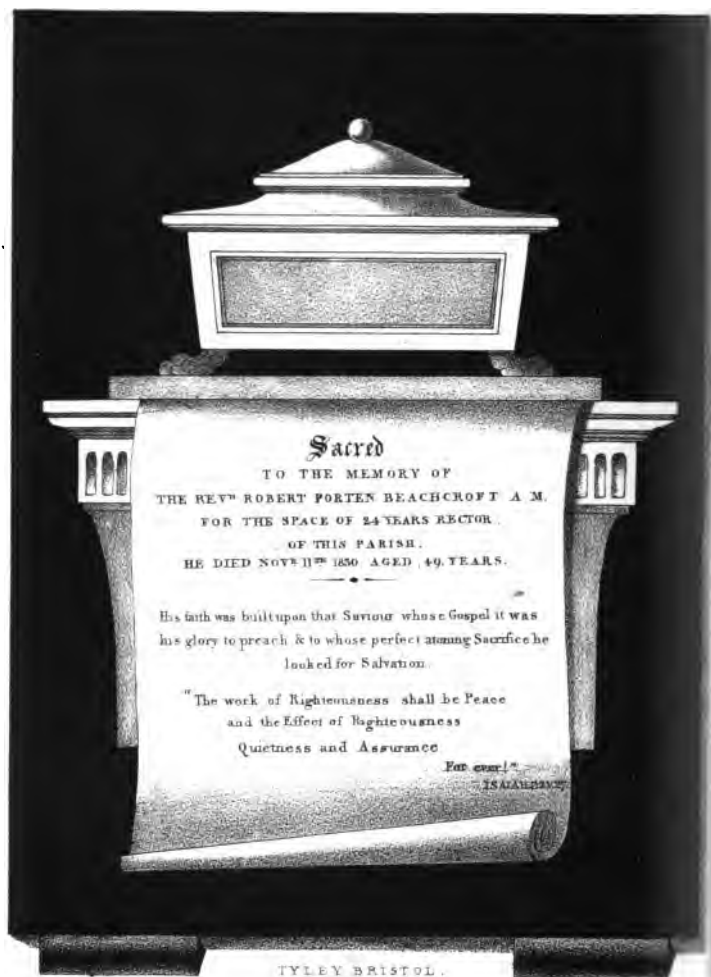
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*Sacred*

TO THE MEMORY OF  
THE REV<sup>d</sup> ROBERT PORTEN BEACHCROFT A. M.  
FOR THE SPACE OF 24 YEARS RECTOR  
OF THIS PARISH.  
HE DIED NOV<sup>r</sup> 11<sup>th</sup> 1850 AGED 49 YEARS.

His faith was built upon that Saviour whose Gospel it was  
his glory to preach & to whose perfect atoning Sacrifice he  
looked for Salvation.

"The work of Righteousness shall be Peace  
and the Effect of Righteousness  
Quietness and Assurance

For ever!"

ISAIAH LXV.

TYLEY BRISTOL.

his last moments, and I hear from ——— that the closing scene was as peaceful as could be desired. He has entered into his rest, and is in the immediate presence of his Saviour on whom he relied for his own acceptance, and whom he delighted to set forth to others, as the only refuge of a sinner, and of whom he had learned by God's grace, in a peculiar manner, to be meek and lowly in heart. Nothing, I am aware, but the consolations of the gospel can support you at such a season ; and I trust, they are fully possessed by you in this time of trial. God is faithful, who has promised that He will not forsake his people,

“ Believe me to remain,

“ My dear Madam,

“ Most sincerely yours,

“ \_\_\_\_\_.

“To Mrs. R. B., Clifton.”

We present the reader with a sketch of Mr. Beachcroft's monument, and with a copy of that inscription which he prepared with his own hand.

“ Though dead he yet speaketh,” not only for the consolation of his friends, but for the instruction of the church at large and for the

peculiar edification of the younger ministers of Christ. For we may, on the whole, assign to Mr. Beachcroft a station far above mediocrity, both in mental and spiritual respects. His mind was greatly more efficient than some superior intelligences have proved in the first and best of causes. In him was no such indolence, and therefore no such inequality, as frequently attends on genius. Nor did he, like some intellectual giants of our land, and even of our day, amuse himself with human theories and mere conjectures, instead of humbly and steadily pursuing the light of Revelation. The Author of his being had given him perspicacity to see, rather than expansiveness (if we may use the word) to comprehend those subjects which successively occupy the human mind. If not strong he was active, if not splendid he was elegant in all his mental operations. And scarcely could the hand of genius have increased the attractive power of his conversation and his writings, especially such as were epistolary. His judgment was marked by a solidity, which is seldom, if ever, found in alliance with exhaustless wit, and transcendent imagination. His scholarship was sound, his theological attainments considerable; and both were indefa-

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tigably employed for the advancement of "truth," for the glory of his God and Saviour.

As a preacher he clothed his thoughts in plain and unambitious language. He strove at least to meet the apprehension of his rustic hearers, and as scriptural phraseology was profusely scattered over his pages, none could fail, except from criminal inattention, to learn much from his discourses. Where they want the exactness of method they possess the suavity of love. His doctrines centred in the cross; he was not ashamed of his Redeemer. "The love of Christ" was the theme nearest to his heart, not only in the *pulpit*, but in the *cottage*; and to how many souls he proved a sweet savour of Christ, will not, and cannot, be known till the day of final disclosure and universal judgment.

But the *personal excellencies* of Mr. Beachcroft impart to his memory an attraction that can never fail. Though partaker of the fall of Adam, and consequently of that "carnal mind" which is "enmity against God," he had so much of amiableness\* by nature, and so much of holi-

\* That such amiableness is perfectly consistent with alienation of heart from God, and if unaccompanied by

ness by grace, that a more blameless character could not easily be discovered. As a son, a husband, a master, a friend, a benefactor and father to the poor, he adorned the doctrine of his Saviour. The blessed death of Mr. Beachcroft was the crown of his Christian life, and forbids his bereaved relatives and friends to sorrow at his tomb "as those that have no hope."

The author would be permitted to insert the following *Elegy* on Mr. Beachcroft:—

" Friend of my youth, with sad, yet buoyant heart,  
I see thee from a world of sin depart,  
While thousands run a vain and fatal race,  
Thine was the glorious course of Christian grace,  
Taught by that power which makes the blind to see,  
Thy bosom owned the sinner's misery,  
Yet to a SAVIOUR rose each contrite thought,  
Till peace divine thy ransomed spirit fraught;  
Then as his own ambassador to tell  
In him what stores of grace and glory dwell,  
Was joy to thee ; most ample and most bright,  
When sinners heard and sought the Lord of light ;  
How dear to them their honoured pastor's name,  
Their tears, their sighs, their looks may now proclaim ;

grace, has in it "the nature of sin," is clear from the history of the youth who turned his back on the Redeemer. Matt. xix. 22.

How dear to me let this faint tribute show,  
And at thy name let memory fonder grow,  
While Christian hope of blest re-union sings,  
Where endless peace from endless mercy springs.

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#### CONCLUDING REMARKS.

To the reader, especially to the ministers of Jesus Christ, "a small still voice" of admonition seems to issue from the tomb; *even that they should more habitually "consider their latter end."* Familiarity with the sick chamber, with the scenes and sounds of death, is calculated to blunt our sense of their commanding import. The very constitution of our nature forbids us to feel them with equal force in the commencement and progress of our ministry. "Our passive impressions," says Bishop Butler, in his unanswered and unanswerable 'Analogy,'\* "by being repeated, grow weaker; and being accustomed to others' mortality, lessens the sensible apprehension of our own." How, then, is this tendency to be counteracted? How is the all-important truth, that the lips which preach are as mortal as the ears which hear, to

\* P. 100.

acquire its due influence over our labours, our life, our heart? The true Christian can be at no loss to furnish an immediate, a correct reply. .

Such an one must feel, like the deceased rector of Blunham, the *necessity of Christian retirement in order to that communion with God which is the life of the immortal soul*; and which, associated as it necessarily is with Christian vigilance, enables the minister to see the first inroad of Satan, the first encroachment of the world, the first assault of the flesh; till, in "the strength of God," he happily resists and overcomes them. "When I cry unto thee, then shall mine enemies turn back."\* Never will he attempt to reconcile the listlessness of the indolent, the dissipation of "the lovers of pleasure," the thirst of the covetous, or the dreams of the ambitious, with a recollection of the warning voice, "*surely I come quickly.*" That voice will call him to his closet, humble him on his knees, awaken his whole spirit to supplication for grace and peace, for fidelity in life and blessedness in death. That voice will also lead him to "search the Scrip-

\* Ps. lvi. 9

tures " for that " truth " with which he may alike edify " the household of faith," convince the pharisee, melt the publican, and through " the power of the Holy Ghost," bring home to himself and to his hearers the consolations which come down from heaven. While strangers to our closet, are we not strangers to our God? In such a case how can we preach, or teach, or live, or die, after the bright example which is before us? The race, the theatre, the assembly, the ball-room, the fox-chase, and the public dinner, will appear to the *dying* minister but miserable substitutes for prayer and holy meditation, for the momentous, yet peaceful, labours of the true evangelist.

And if by retiring into the closet we are led more seriously to contemplate the day when we shall go into the grave, shall we not, like Mr. Beachcroft, *study to be found faithful in every act and office of the ministry?* With eternity before his eyes, and the knowledge of Christ in his heart, the preacher of the word will prove by appealing to " the law," that " all have sinned " to the condemnation and ruin of their souls; and by unfolding " the glorious gospel," he will show the refuge, the restoration, the redemption, provided for them in Christ Jesus; the necessity



and value of that faith which alone can justify a sinner in the sight of God. And the more frequently the minister of Christ hears that solemn sound which tells him of the departure of a soul, the more tenderly will he say to those who are present in the body, "We pray you in Christ's stead 'be ye reconciled to God.'" The knell will also produce a deeper sense of his obligation "to feed the flock of Christ." Feeling that every opportunity may prove his last, his addresses in the cottage and in the sanctuary will be more full of Christ, and consequently of truth, of love, of peace, and consolation. He will illustrate the exquisite saying of a Scotch Divine : \* "Though all Scripture be as gold, yet this (Christ's love) is a pearl in the gold ; though all be like the heavens, yet this is like the sun and stars."

To consider his latter end will also *lead the survivor to imitate the life of the deceased*, as far as he himself, through grace, copied that of his Redeemer. Thus the conduct of the minister will echo his faithful admonitions. † ' By pureness, . . . . . by long-suffering, by kindness, . . . . . by love unfeigned . . . . . by the

\* Anthony Burgess on John xvii. p. 1.

† 2 Cor. vi.

armour of righteousness on the right-hand, and on the left, by honour and dishonour, by evil report and good report ;" in a word, by " walking with God," he will prove that his motives are untainted either by interest or hypocrisy ; that what he says he feels ; what he recommends he practises, or sincerely aims to perform. The world may censure him for his strange departure from their ways ; but he will pity the world for their blind and desperate departure from the ways of God. Their devotedness to things temporal proves to him the impossibility of paying an excessive attention to things eternal. While they dread not too much pleasure, too much wealth, too much reputation, he sees no reason to be afraid (if indeed that excess were possible) of too much love to Him who has " opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers."

Not to multiply inferences, we will conclude by submitting the following contrast to the reader. Miserable, or fearfully insensible to the terrors of impending vengeance, is that minister in the hour of dissolution, by whose lips, whose life, and whose heart, *self* has been unhappily exalted, and the Saviour of the world denied ; and who, notwithstanding his high

vocation as "messenger of the Lord of hosts," has been "conformed to this world," and satisfied with "the praise of men." Death strips him of his enjoyments, tears from him his prostituted dignity, and brings him trembling and confounded to the bar of God.

But happy that ambassador for God who, in the devoted spirit of a Beachcroft, has not only preached Christ, and made known his gospel in the cottage, and carried the consecrated censer from the public to the domestic, from the domestic to the private altar; but who has also been "led by the Spirit" in this age of shameless infidelity, to illustrate Christian principles by Christian practice. Sickness, sufferings and death will then but serve to demonstrate the gracious presence of a Saviour, and to prepare the spirit by that purifying process which is so necessary to a corrupt creature, for what eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived, even that "fulness of joy" in the presence of God and of the Lamb, to which his people shall rise from the darkness and silence of the grave.

"Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his."

**EXTRACTS**  
**FROM**  
**A SERMON ON THE DEATH**  
**OF THE**  
**REV. ROBERT PORTEN BEACHCROFT, A.M.**  
**RECTOR OF BLUNHAM,**  
**BY THE REV. JOHN MENDHAM,**  
**CURATE OF BLUNHAM.**



ST. LUKE xxiii. 28.

*Weep not for me, but weep for yourselves and  
for your children.*

BRETHREN,—We have paid our last tribute of respect and affection to one whom we might justly style our father and our friend. We have committed to the tomb his earthly remains, . . . . . in the assurance that long since on earth he had heard his Saviour's voice, and had come forth from the death of sin to the life of righteousness; that even now his soul standeth with joy before his Father's throne, and that at the last hour he will be one of that numerous and triumphant multitude which shall rise to meet the Lord in the air.

How highly he was respected, and how greatly beloved, not only in his own parish, but also throughout the neighbourhood, that numerous

assemblage which followed him to the grave, and that which is this day present in the house of God, may fully prove. Then ye indulged your sorrow by taking a mournful, and, as it were, a final view of him as he lay in his grave ; now ye are assembled to hear something more concerning him—how he met ‘ the last enemy ;’ how he was enabled to stand in the trying hour. It is my office this day to set these things before you ; to shew you that, as he lived so he died ; and then to urge, that would you experience the Christian’s death, you must imitate the Christian’s life. If, with the apostle, you would say, “ To me to die is gain,” with him you must also say, “ To me to live is Christ.”

Now, as he long lived amongst you, and as his faithfulness as a minister endeared him to many, his affection and benevolence to all who knew him, as even those who disregarded *the minister* could not but love *the Christian* ; and as *loss* often makes us more alive to a sense of what is valuable than *possession*, I cannot wonder that many a heart should be filled with sorrow, and many eyes run down with tears, when you reflect that all earthly union with your late minister is dissolved . . . . . And

though we had the mournful event long before our eyes; and though the accounts which we from time to time received left us but little hope of his final recovery, yet now the stroke is come upon us we feel it to be afflicting and grievous. The friend, who so kindly aided you in your various troubles and distresses, and who so earnestly and laboriously endeavoured to shew you your best and truest interests, is seen and heard by you no more.

Let us then seek consolation in the words chosen for my text. They were spoken by our blessed Saviour in an hour of unexampled sorrow; they are replete with goodness and love, and may convey the most important instruction.

The text was also chosen by your late minister as very suitable and appropriate to the death of a believer. Surely, then, the words are well fitted to our use, when contemplating the death of one concerning whom we are assured that he himself was a believer in the gospel of our Lord and only Saviour Jesus Christ.

Our text contains a two-fold direction. 1. We are admonished to dry our tears. 2. We are allowed to give them full vent.

1. We are admonished to dry our tears;



"Weep not for me." Does this direction sound strange? The view of any one lying in the chamber of sickness and on the bed of death—torn away from many comforts, and from the presence of dear friends and dearer relatives—tortured from time to time with the pains of illness, for the relief of which art can do so little—death making evident approaches; . . . surely such a spectacle may command our tears. Yet, if the words now before us are spoken by the sufferer himself, how soothing and consoling the direction! As if he should say, "Low and cast down as I may appear, I am neither left nor deserted. Pitiable as I may seem, I am not unhappy. I feel supported under all by that arm which brought salvation; and in the prospect of a glorious eternity how light are these sufferings of time!"

But we may pass on to *the character* of that person who can say in the hour of death, "Weep not for me." This is not the privilege of all. Nor is it every one whose dying chamber is, as it were, the dark anti-room to the palace of eternal peace and glory. No! Such directions the believer alone can give; such honour, such peace, belongs to the saints alone. Who, then, can say at such an hour, "Weep not for me?" Who but

the man that has peace with our God through our Lord Jesus Christ, and whose justification in the court of heaven is proved by the sanctification of his life and conduct upon earth; in whose spirit there is no guile; who, as he experiences the power of God in subduing his iniquities, rejoices in the reflection, "Thou hast cast all my sins into the depths of the sea." To give so consolatory a direction belongs to those who have considered both parts of the seal which God himself hath set: "the Lord knoweth them that are his, and let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity." They exercise themselves always to have a conscience void of offence toward God and toward men. They rejoice in the hope of being found not having their own righteousness, but that of the Saviour Jesus Christ, and yet follow after that holiness without which no man shall see the Lord. They rejoice with the sweet Psalmist of Israel, that "He hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure. It is all my salvation and all my desire." Such are the persons, who can say in the hour of pain and sickness, "*Weep not for me.*"

Let us next consider *the views* which would

influence the true believer to say, "Weep not for me."

His sorrowing friends might say, "Can we see thee taken away from all the enjoyments of this life—from friends who so justly esteemed thee, and from the church of God, in the midst of so much usefulness, and yet not weep for thee?" "No;" he might confidently reply, "'weep not for me,' I have a better home and better comforts in prospect, than those from which I am called; I am not so poor as to have no other treasures than those which the world can give me; I have been taught to set my affections upon things above, and therefore to leave without regret all I ever possessed or enjoyed in this world. As to my friends in Christ, I hope to meet them again, to part no more for ever. As to my 'usefulness,' I bless God that while health and strength remained, He enabled me, 'in godly sincerity' at least, to engage in his work. But now that I am called to my rest, why should I repine? Though he has used me as his instrument for good, God can carry on his work without me; his great and glorious designs will never fail of their full accomplishment."

His friends might continue, "Do we see

thee so tried with sickness as to have no rest? can we give thee no effectual aid? and shall we not weep for thee?"—"No," he would rejoin, "'weep not for me,' though my sufferings are indeed great; yet I deserve, for my numerous and aggravated sins, far greater. How many eminent servants of God have been more tried than I am! How much greater the pains of my dying Saviour, and he had done nothing amiss! His sufferings were on my account. And blessed be God, mine are but for a moment and are not worthy to be compared with that *glory* which shall be revealed. O what comfort to feel assured in the midst of all my affliction, mine iniquity is pardoned through the blood-shedding of Jesus Christ! Had I now the work of religion to begin—did I now lie exposed to the heavy wrath of God—were these sufferings the lightest I had to bear—had I in addition to them the terrors of an uneasy and troubled conscience—if God were not my God, nor Christ my Saviour, then might you justly 'weep for me.' Think not I am left alone. I find now the presence of my Saviour; his grace strengthening me; his Spirit upholding me; He meets me in the dark valley; He speaks peace to my soul, and all is well; 'weep not for me.'"

“Can we think,” his friends might add, “of thy body a prey to worms, and soon to moulder in the grave, and not weep for thee?”

“No,” he would cheerfully reply, “‘weep not for me;’ Christ my Saviour has overcome death, and in Him I also have victory. He has broken the bars of the grave, and promised that I in due time shall do the same. When the appointed time cometh, He will clothe me, not as now with a diseased, mortal, corruptible body, but with one immortal and incorruptible, as my Redeemer’s.

“Have I been so long a stranger and a pilgrim, and shall I now that I am near my home shrink back with dismay? Has my body been so long tried with disease and pain, and shall I grieve when about to lay them aside for ever?

“Have I so long carried on a warfare against the temptations of Satan, the seductions of the world, and above all against the remains of my obstinate and corrupt nature; and shall I lament that I am now going to put off my armour and put on my crown?

“Long since has communion with the Father and with the Son, by the Holy Spirit, been my chief comfort and delight. But such seasons have been always short, and too often broken

and interrupted ; ever liable to intrusion from within and from without. And shall I lament because I shall be admitted to an eternal communion ? a communion of which, while on earth, I could form no adequate conception ; and which knows no interruption, no conclusion—for it is promised, ‘they shall ever be with the Lord.’ ‘*Weep not for me !*’”

Such then were the character and views of our late lamented pastor. That he had a right and saving faith, his ministrations, public and private, might demonstrate. You who so long heard him, well knew how faithfully he “preached Christ crucified ;” the sole foundation of your hopes, your peace, your joy, your glory. He embraced that “great salvation” which he so affectionately made known to you. He walked in that path of holiness which he so earnestly and faithfully pointed out to all his hearers. His life proved his hope to be genuine. In every relation of life he was the same. To all mild, gentle, and courteous, none could know him without feeling a regard for him. I have heard it remarked, that in his presence discord never arose ; or when it arose, was speedily silenced. His was not *negative* goodness. Of him it might be said, as of the right-

eous Job, "When the ear heard him, then it blessed him; when the eye saw him, it gave witness to him. He delivered the poor and fatherless, and him that had none to help him. The blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon him. He caused the widow's heart to sing for joy." And as he did justly and loved mercy, so he also walked humbly with his God. That he was "not of the world," but that Christ had "taken him out of the world," his self-denial, his spirituality, and his zeal for his Master's glory might uniformly prove.

But why do we mention these things? Not to magnify the creature, but to exalt the Saviour. Of *his* righteousness, and of his only, did your beloved minister make mention even with his latest breath. To *grace* he thankfully ascribed his every good work—yea, his every holy thought. Yet we have remarked his Christian life, in order to make it manifest that *he was what he appeared to be*.

When visited with his last sickness, and more especially when recovering that power of speech of which he had been for a time deprived, what were his first words? Not those of complaint, grief, regret, or murmuring; but those of joy and thankfulness. He then said, "God is

LOVE !' *Blessed be God: I have not now all the work to begin !*" However brought low by illness, he was still evidently an object of God's love and tender care.

And now permit me to mention one thing which evidenced both his happy frame of mind, and his affectionate regard for you. When he could no more benefit you as through grace he had so often done, by preaching, by advice, by warnings, by consolations carried to your own homes, he did not forget you. As he could do no more, he still bore you, as it were, before the throne of grace, in hearty and fervent prayer for your everlasting welfare. And few things afforded him more joy than to hear of any who began to take serious thought for the things of eternity; who were awakened from their state of sin and death, and brought from the service of the world, to that of God and of the Lamb.

When at length he felt the nearer approach of death, his peace did not forsake him, nor his hope make him ashamed.\* And who does not desire a peace, a hope, like his? Which of you can refrain from saying, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like

\* For particulars of his blessed death, see the 15th chapter.



his?" Well I remember that the last act of devotion in which I saw him engaged was that of  *fervent prayer*, that all who then stood before him might be children of God through faith in Christ Jesus.

Secondly. We are allowed to give our tears full vent.

" Weep for yourselves and for your children." It is not required of us in the gospel entirely to suppress our sorrows. Let them be directed in the right channel, let them be restrained within due bounds. And here shall I lament the loss our church has sustained, of a minister so faithful and laborious? Shall I lament the loss our parish has sustained, of a kind and benevolent pastor? Shall I speak of societies, of many of which he was an active member? Shall I lament the loss society in general has sustained of one so pious, so learned, so affectionate, so courteous? That sorrow which is so greatly felt by his nearest relatives, may be said to extend wherever his name was known.

Ye, who sat under his ministry for four-and-twenty years, has not Christ crucified been evidently set before your eyes, as the only Saviour of us lost and miserable sinners? Might

he not say in the words of the apostle Paul, "I call you to record that I am pure from the blood of all men; for I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God?" Hath not the impenitent been warned? Hath not the penitent been directed to the great source of peace and consolation? Have not the backsliding been recalled, and the steadfast been encouraged and animated to persevere to the end?"

Some, perhaps, who were once strangers to the truth, may now be saying to themselves, "Yes, I feel that I have lost a friend indeed. How long had I wandered in the ways of sin; how carelessly was I hastening on to my eternal ruin; how heedlessly was I standing even on the brink of hell, but under my deceased minister I was arrested in my sad course; I was convinced of my sin and danger, and then I was led to seek that grace of Jesus Christ which is the only sure refuge of a lost sinner; that fountain which is still opened for sin and for uncleanness. Thus God has given me the hope of pardon and peace, yea, of eternal life and glory."

We may, from what has been said, urge on all sinners the necessity of repentance. For if

a minister so faithful and so blessed, was still so grievously afflicted; if all his trials were only that correction which the Father of spirits judges necessary for those whom he loves best, how great will be the sufferings of those whom God shall hereafter punish, not as a father his son, but as an offended sovereign a rebel, or as a judge a condemned criminal! If judgment begin at the house of God, what shall be the end of those who believe not the gospel? If the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and sinner appear? How fearful will your state be, when ye shall see the Son of man, whom ye have slighted, coming to take vengeance—coming “with ten thousand of his saints to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all the hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him!”

Were there not too many in his time who occasioned him great and continual sorrow by their sins, by turning a deaf ear to his instructions, and by setting his counsels at nought? Might he not say with the apostle, “Many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now

tell you even weeping, they are the enemies of the cross of Christ, whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things." But now your sins can no more grieve him; they are laid not to *his* charge but to *yours*; for he warned you of their evil consequences. Therefore they will surely rest upon your own heads.

I beseech you then by all the regard you ever felt for the departed, by all his kindness as a friend, all his faithfulness as a minister, by all the advice and instructions you received from him in private as in public, "flee from the wrath to come;" put away iniquity from you, that it may not be your ruin. Cease to do evil, learn to do well. Flee to the fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness, that so your sins may be washed away. Then may even you, who by your sins grieved him in this world, be his crown of rejoicing in the next. There may he see the grace of God magnified in adding you to the host of the redeemed.

Let me urge you to be diligent and active in the service of your heavenly Master. It will not be enough for you to think well, or to speak well, of your departed minister, to admire his character,

and to wish that you were like him; nor will it be enough to have been attached to him as a friend and benefactor. It is required of you to believe as he believed, and so to live as he lived. For this end be earnest, like him, in private communion with God; like him, "search the Scriptures," and "strive to enter in at the strait gate." Then may you, after his bright example, be holy in your conduct, faithfully discharge all the duties of the station in which it has pleased God to place you, and follow him as he himself followed Christ. "Mark," says St. Paul, "those who walk so as ye have us for an ensample." Would you have their consolation in death? Seek the grace which renewed them, and which will be effectual to you also if you seek it earnestly. Would you die the death of the righteous? Imitate their holy life.

I would remark that such considerations cannot fail to bring peace and comfort to every child of God. You have fresh reason to be steadfast and immoveable in the faith, and always to abound in the work of the Lord; for you have had fresh proof that "your labour will not be in vain in the Lord." And if in the hour of death you shall be able to say, like the deceased, "I die at peace with God,

through Jesus Christ, and with all the world ;<sup>o</sup> will you not have a consolatory view of the brightness of your final portion, and of the abounding goodness of your God, in and through his dear Son ?

And as you believe that your beloved minister is gone to glory, think, ye who are in Christ, think how soon you will again meet him, and meet to part no more. And though he, by whose ministrations you have so much benefited, is now no more, *Jesus* is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever ; that he can carry on his work independently of any instruments ; and that, “ having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them to the end.” \*

In conclusion, I would say, with an eminent servant of God on a similar occasion—“ Remember the words and actions of your deceased pastor ; endeavour to conceive at all times what he would say were he permitted to speak, and what counsel would he give you. Beg of God to give you grace and wisdom to follow that counsel which he has given you in times past. Do not suffer your grief to waste itself in useless lamentations ; but endeavour to prevent the

\* John xiii. 1.

worst consequences of this bereaving providence, by walking in your pastor's steps, that when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye may receive a crown of glory which fadeth not away."

THE END.

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